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Acknowledgments

The present book is based on *Xianqin Fuhao Sixiang Yanjiu* 先秦符号思想研究 (*An Inquiry into Semiotic Thought of Pre-Qin Period in China*), a monograph written in Chinese by Dong Zhu and published by Sichuan University Press in China. When the book came out in 2014, it never occurred to the author that it would have caught so much academic attention. More unimaginable was that it would be the basis upon which an English version would be prepared for international readers. Until 2016, a sample chapter of the English version of the book came into being. Working together were Dong Zhu, Wei Ren, and Jia Peng. Zhu is responsible for the whole book, especially the vernacular interpretations of ancient Chinese classics. Ren and Peng are coauthors and translators of the present book, offering suggestions as to how the book should be adapted to cater to the needs of international readers. In most cases the three authors can reach an agreement. In the rare cases where they cannot see eye to eye with one another, heated discussions would be held with fellow scholars, especially those from the Institute of Semiotics and Media Studies at Sichuan University, as patient listeners and prudent judges. The three authors have benefited greatly from these discussions and are quite pleased to find our understanding bettered and our English versions improved. Ren is mainly responsible for Introduction, Chaps. 2–4, while Peng contributes greatly to Chaps. 1 and 5.

In preparing the present book, the English title is modified for the convenience of English readers. "Pre-Qin" refers to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods by Chinese historians. This term sometimes includes "dynasties" further back in history like Xia (ca. 2070–1600 BCE), Shang (ca. 1600–1046 BCE), and Zhou (ca. 1046–256 BCE) Periods. Given that those "dynasties" were actually alliances of kingdoms and Qin was the first imperial dynasty, western scholars of Chinese history refer to the period as the "Pre-Imperial Period" just to save the explanation of Qin. That is why we prefer to call the period as Pre-Imperial China in the book.

Upon the completion of the project, we'd like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the people who have assisted our work and made it possible.

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In December 2014, the publication of the Chinese edition of the book has attracted wide academic attention from the Chinese semiotic circle. Reviews were authored by Zhi Su, Xiaofang Yan, and Shizhen LI, respectively, offering views from different perspectives. There were disagreements, constructive suggestions as well as positive comments, providing the authors with reference for further improvement. For the valuable feedback, the authors felt very grateful to these readers.

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Guangzhou, China — Dong Zhu
Chengdu, China — Wei Ren
Guangzhou, China — Jia Peng

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Chapter 1
Introduction

At any stage or in any form of any civilization, the use of signs is a predominant element. Early China has a recorded history dating back to the third century BCE, and its early thoughts about the world are well documented in a writing system that continues today. As such, it is one of the ancient nations richest in semiotic heritage. Its most celebrated periods, namely the Spring and Autumn Period (770–475 BCE), and Warring States Period (475–221 BCE), are often compared to the Plato and Aristotle's period in Greece. Reportedly, there were "A Hundred Schools Contending" at the time, which, judging from the documents surviving today, seems no exaggeration.

Before the second century BCE, there appeared to be a "central government," but those "dynasties" were tribal alliances like those in the Xia (ca. 2070–1600 BCE) and Shang (ca. 1600–1046 BCE) Periods, or an alliance of kingdoms in the Zhou Period (ca. 1046–256 BCE). The fiefdoms that appeared in the early Zhou Period were more like castles. They were meant to consolidate the reign of the royal family. However, in those periods, the Sovereign of Zhou lost his control over the fiefdoms, as the local "princes" no longer obeyed his orders but acted on their own wills instead. However, with loose union, fierce competition, and dominance of a nominal central government, Chinese philosophy embraced its most glorious time. This time not only serves as the origin of the thoughts of the philosophers of a hundred schools in both the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, but also helps lay the foundation for the principal spirits for the ensuing development of Chinese civilization. Private schools emerged, academic studies were no longer the special preserve of the privileged few, and numerous philosophers made their voices heard. Therefore, these periods were known for "the flourishing of a hundred schools." At this time, the society underwent great social changes. Scholars started to inquire into the problems of society and of life. Freed from the constraints of any overwhelming authority, these philosophers were actively involved in their mental pursuit, contributing to the intellectual activities in Chinese history.

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To explain the world in which they lived and competed with various adversaries, the Chinese invented a sign system. The emergence and evolution of *Yi* (*Book of Changes*) is complicated, but it eventually took the form of the two polars of *yin* and *yang*, *wuxing* (five elements), and *bagua* (eight trigrams). These signs were brought together into an inclusive system that could account for almost everything in the sky above and on the earth below. According to the *Book of Changes*, "There is the Grand Terminus, which produced the Two Elementary Forms. Those Two Forms produced the Four Emblematic Symbols, which again produced the Eight Trigrams." "The Grand Terminus," or *taiji* as is known in Chinese, refers to the chaos before the sky and earth were separated, which is similar to the primitive state before the Big Bang in modern astrophysics. The ancient Chinese considered this state the origin of the universe. It was naturally so, without the interference of any supernatural power like God in the Western tradition. Guided by this belief, the ancient Chinese emphasized wholeness and associativity in observing things and studying relevant signs.

Without external interference, the Grand Terminus produced the Two Elementary Forms, namely *yin* and *yang*. The ancient Chinese came up with the concepts of *yin* and *yang* while observing and pairing oppositional natural phenomena. The *Book of Changes* focuses on the philosophy of how *yin* and *yang* interact with each other and lead to the creation of a myriad of things in the world. Had it not been for the interaction and integration of *yin* and *yang*, human society would not have become what it is today. In the *Book of Songs* (the ancient collection of songs from the eleventh to sixth centuries BCE), or *Shijing* as is more commonly known, a song details, "Gongliu, the ancient leader of the Zhou tribe, led his people in exploring the plains and mountains. He surveyed the light and the shade, and viewed the course of the streams and springs as well. Places that face the sun are said to be in the *yang* whereas those that do not are in the *yin*. Likewise, day is regarded as *yang,* whereas night *yin*; men are *yang*, whereas women *yin*; males are *yang*, whereas females *yin*. Everything that has its opposite can be accounted for by this dualistic category of *yin* and *yang*."

In the *Book of Changes*, *yin* and *yang* are respectively represented in the trigrams by ⚋, a divided *yin* line, and *yang* ⚊, an undivided line. As to the reference of these *yin* and *yang* lines, some scholars believe the *yin* line came from the female reproductive organ and the *yang* line from that of the male. The two lines are reminiscent of reproductive worship among the ancients. The permutation and combination of *yin* and *yang* lines produce Four Emblematic Symbols, namely ⚌ (old *yang*), ⚍ (old *yin*), ⚎ (young *yang*), and ⚏ (young *yin*). Each of the Emblematic Symbols combined with either. In this way, a *yin* or *yang* line makes a trigram. Altogether, there are eight trigrams, namely ☰ (Qian), ☱ (Dui), ☲ (Li), ☳ (Zhen), ☴ (Xun), ☵ (Kan), ☶ (Gen), and ☷ (Kun). According to the ancient Chinese people, the eight trigrams symbolize the eight constituents of the world. Before long, people realized that the eight trigrams did not suffice to account for the interactions between the myriad of things. Therefore, a permutation and combination of the eight trigrams led to a system of Sixty-four Hexagrams. Thanks to the development from the Grand Terminus, Two Elementary Forms, and Four Emblematic Symbols to the Eight Trigrams and eventually the Sixty-four Hexagrams, a sophisticated sign system was gradually established, ready

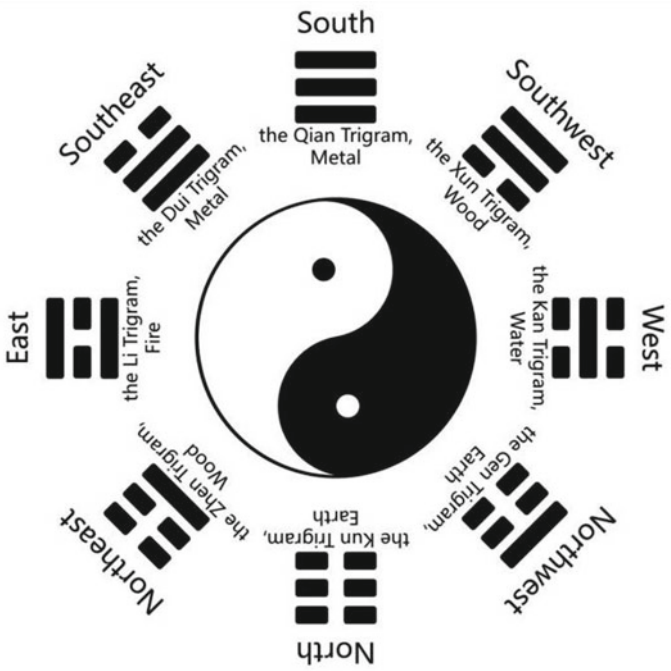

Fig. 1.1 The Universe in the eight trigrams composed of *Yin* and *Yang*

to represent all things and phenomena in the world. This is shown in the following diagram well known to Chinese people (Fig. 1.1).

Another sign system connected with *yin* and *yang* is that of the *wuxing,* or Five Elements. The two diagrams did not intermingle until the Warring States Period, although the *wuxing* already had a long history. For example, the *Shujing* (Book of Documents) includes records on *wuxing*. Close examination reveals that it was originally related to the stars, after which the concept of *wuxing* soon embraced the five directions and five matters, and became the five abstract signs (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth) representing the five attributes. Inspired by the relationship of generation and restriction, scholars in the Warring States Period from the Yin-Yang School, like Zou Yan (305–240 BCE), applied the *wuxing* theory to explain the development of the universe and vicissitude of society. Despite spatial and temporal differences, it seems this theory can explain all things in the world.

From it, a theory was then developed in which the five elements generate and restrict each other. The theory later became an all-inclusive sign system, capable of explaining the inherent motivation for the growth and decline of all things in the universe, serving as the physiological foundation for the function of human bodies, and underlying reasons for the rise and fall of dynasties. Among the five elements, relationships of generation and restriction exist.

Cyclical generation implies that one thing can promote, aid, or bring forth another. Wood generates fire, fire earth, earth metal, metal water, and water wood. Restriction means to bring under control or restraint. The order of restriction is as follows: water restricts fire, fire metal, metal wood, wood earth, and earth water. There are five directions, five tastes, five organs, five species, five notes, five virtues, and five cereals. There seems no end to this list. Everything can find its match in *wuxing*. Everything interacts with everything else according to the principle of generation and restriction.

Semiotics is the study of meaning, focusing on how meaning is generated, communicated, and interpreted. In the theoretical framework of *wuxing*, all semiosis is regulated by the principle of generation and restriction. In cases where the principles were violated and the harmonious relationship broken, disasters and misfortunes would inevitably follow. In this way, *wuxing* thought became norms guiding the behaviors of the people, contributing to the construction of symbolic order in social politics and in life. Since the thinking mode of ancient Chinese was based on *wuxing* thought, one cannot expect to have insight into traditional Chinese culture without understanding *wuxing*. Historiography in the ensuing dynasties records how all disasters happened due to the violation of principles of *wuxing* generation (Fig. 1.2).

Today, these signs still greatly impact on Chinese people's thinking, and have therefore permeated social-cultural life in China. The naming of the two emergency hospitals in Central China's Wuhan City, the first Chinese city seriously impacted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, is a good example. The Thunder God Mountain Hospital and the Fire God Mountain Hospital were so named because of the influence of *wuxing* thought, although no official explanation from relevant authorities. The table below shows that the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) correspond respectively with the five organs (liver, heart, spleen, lung, and kidney) (Table 1.1).

According to this cyclical generation-restriction principle, among the five organs, "lung" corresponds with "metal" in the five elements. The circle of generation and restriction reveals that fire controls metal. The Fire God Mountain Hospital is so named with the hope that the Fire God will bring "metal-lung" problems under control. The Thunder God Mountain Hospital is so named because thunder is related to the *Zhen* trigram, which corresponds with wood in *wuxing* thought. Wood generates fire, which restricts metal, thus helping to control this illness of the lung.

In 221 BCE, Ying Zheng, King of the Qin, conquered the other kingdoms in China and established the First Empire, the Qin Dynasty. He replaced the system of enfeoffment with one of prefectures and counties. According to the new system, former fiefs were reorganized into prefectures and counties formerly ruled by magistrates were re-appointed by the central government. Thus, Qin became the first imperial dynasty in China with a centralized power. Furthermore, the First Emperor standardized the writing system, the measurements of length and weight, and the width of the highways. It is also said in historiography that to quench the subversive thoughts, many scholars were buried, and all books were burned except those on subjects like medicine. The Qin Dynasty lasted no more than twenty years (221–207 BCE),

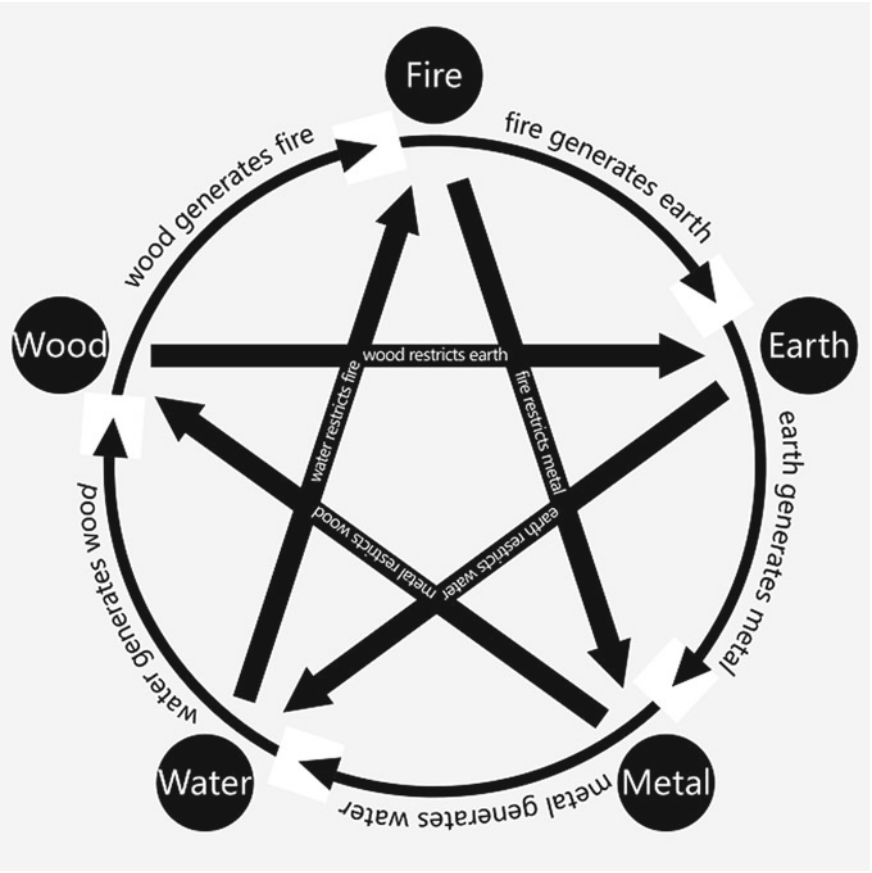

Fig. 1.2 Circle of generation and restriction between the five elements

Table 1.1 Relationship between five elements and five organs

Five elements	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Five organs	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lung	Kidney

whereas the Han Dynasty that followed lasted more than four centuries (202 BCE–220 CE). The latter was selective in terms of the centralizing measures taken by its predecessor, and among the contending schools, Confucianism was favored. As a result, Chinese culture became unified, and the centuries of the hundred schools contending ended.

However, in the Han Dynasty, *yinyang*, *wuxing*, and *bagua* merged into the art of divination that gradually evolved into a minor tradition that served as compensation to the Confucian doctrine ruling the nation. Its influence, felt in Chinese utilitarian culture and folk thought, was great enough to counterbalance the culture of the upper

class that preaches only Confucianism. This tradition remains an indispensable part of the established Chinese culture today.

To sum up, Chinese civilization was initially highly semiotic. While all cultures worldwide are semiotic, Chinese culture is likely more systematically semiotic with a complicated interconnected doctrine. This is noteworthy because the *Book of Changes* started a tradition of interpreting things and their changes in the physical universe, the psychological and physiological organic "inside universe," which has served as the foundation of Chinese philosophy that lasted three to four millennia. This makes Chinese culture the only continuously surviving one since ancient times. Even today, archaic semiotic thoughts still play an essential part in Chinese life, contributing to China's modernization. To better understand China, efforts should be made to grasp the semiotic thought that flourished at the beginning of Chinese culture.

In the following chapters, this book begins its study by reexamining the semiotic thoughts contained in the *Book of Changes*, and then inquires into the thoughts of the major philosophers of the hundred schools. It provides insights into the philosophers' findings concerning the relationship between sign and meaning. In particular, it concentrates on how the prosperity of the various contending semiotic thoughts complemented each other in forming a sign system that helped the formation of a Chinese view of the world. As the first monograph in any language to systematically summarize Chinese semiotic thoughts in the Pre-Imperial Period, it is hoped that this book will help promote understanding of the traditional Chinese culture and mindset.

Chapter 2
Semiotic Significance of *Zhouyi*

Zhouyi, or *The Yi of Zhou,* consists of the *Book of Changes* and *Commentary on the Book of Changes*. It is known as the most ancient, difficult, and mysterious book in China and is hailed as the oriental Bible. For more than 2000 years, it has ranked top among the Confucian classics, indicating its important status among ancient Chinese books. Countless people have attempted to annotate it, tending to blend their thoughts with the ideas contained in the book, rendering it inclusive of different categories of knowledge. In reviewing this book, one should try not to get lost in its vast number of annotations. From a semiotic perspective, we regard the *Book of Changes* as a simplified way of understanding the world through a set of signs obtained through observing objects. *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, with its rich content on signs, constitutes a philosophical interpretation of the *Yi*. The study of the *Yi* in ancient China can be considered the origin of China's study of signs.

2.1 Collecting Images Through Observing Objects: The Birth of Thought About Signs in Ancient Times

Zhouyi, a book of divination and a classic of Confucianism, is mysterious with its various hexagrams that constantly confuse readers. Noteworthy is that when we "try to understand it by figuring out the relationship between signs and meaning, the sixty-four hexagrams will no longer be bewildering because they become signs with meaning, just like characters in this book" (Yu, 1990: 113–114). The book's long existence has resulted in the loss of meanings of some signs. In pursuing these meanings, people later uncovered and fostered new ones. Among such efforts, *Ten Wings*, or *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, represents the fruits of research by scholars from the Warring States Period (470–221 BCE) to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). According to Li Jingchi, "The life experience and philosophy of life obtained by compilers, as well as documents from different periods in history, are

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included in *Commentary on the Book of Changes*" (Li, 1978: 4). Greater difficulties emerge in interpreting hexagram signs when considering their long history (including explanations of the hexagrams and lines) and failure to record the context in which hexagrams generate meaning. "The births of Chengji and Muzi, two noblemen in the State of Lu, are recorded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Nevertheless, no one can understand the meanings of these divinatory words when the explanations of hexagram users are recorded with no backgrounds introduced. Hexagrams and explanations of the component lines were both recorded by divinatory officers. On many occasions, we cannot understand the meaning of divinatory words because we do not know their backgrounds" (Li, 1978: 421). It is difficult to identify the meaning of divinatory words because no one knows exactly how ancient people created and used these explanations of hexagram signs. Despite being recorded in the form of characters and being a specification of signs, explanations of hexagrams and lines in the *Book of Changes* and *Commentary on the Book of Changes* still have great room for interpretation because of the loss of their original context and lack of certainty regarding their significant content. Of course, this has also provided better access to scholars committed to annotating and interpreting *Zhouyi*.

2.1.1 The Written Text of Zhouyi

Scholars held different opinions about interpreting the meaning of "Zhouyi" since ancient times. One school holds that the character "Zhou" refers to the Zhou Period (ca. 1046–256 BCE). Therefore, *Zhouyi* refers to the *Yi* (or *Book of Changes*) of the Zhou Period. It was thus named to distinguish it from the other two *Yi*s, namely *Lianshan* of the Xia Period (ca. 2070–1600 BCE) and *Guizang* of the Shang Period (ca. 1600–1046 BCE). According to *The Rites of Zhou*, divinatory officials can learn from *Lianshan, Guizang,* and *Zhouyi*, the three classics that constitute the *Yi*. Each of these books has eight trigrams and sixty-four hexagrams (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 637); thus, they are all considered parts of *Yi* and represent different words for divination. However, other schools do not agree. They believe *yi*[1] means change and Zhou means universal. Therefore, Zhouyi refers to universal changes. Compilers of the *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* noted that "*Zhouyi* covers so wide a range that it becomes all-inclusive" (Ji, 1997a, 1997b: 3). Zheng Xuan, a famous Confucian scholar in the second century, shared this view, stating that "*Zhouyi* discusses change and covers subjects of such universal range that it becomes all-inclusive" (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 8).

There are two main definitions for "*yi*." The Chinese character yi 易, is a combination of 日, the sun, and 月, the moon, representing the *yang* and *yin*, respectively. However, *yi* may refer to lizards, creatures adept at changing their own color. Considering the content of *Zhouyi*, *yi* can be interpreted as "change." For instance, the first

[1] Note that the italicized *yi* refers to the concept of 易, while the italicized *yi* with the first letter capitalized, *Yi*, refers to the *Book of Changes*.

line of Qian (Chen, 2014: 141) is "the dragon lies hiding in the deep. It is not the time for active doing," and the sixth line is "the dragon exceeds the proper limits. There will be occasion for repentance." This can be viewed as a process of change. All living things lack strength in their initial stages of growth, making it necessary to protect themselves. Changes then take place after a period during which energy is accumulated. The fourth line indicates a stage trending toward activity, and the fifth represents a stage of peak performance, after which things begin to lose strength, entering the stage of "occasion for repentance." When analyzing a hexagram, misfortunes or bliss do not remain unchanged but can transform into other images. Wang Bi explained that "hexagrams have a background of time. Lines represent changes in accordance with time. There can be auspicious or unfortunate time. One will actively behave himself or maintain humbleness to hide his splendor. There are complex and simple hexagrams, and explanations for them vary. At first glance, one hexagram may be deemed auspicious, but can turn out to be ill-fortunate. When obstacles seem to be hidden inside, these can also become a good opportunity" (Lou, 1980: 604). Changes can occur in or between hexagrams. For example, the hexagrams *Tai, Pi*, *Jiji,* and *Weiji* can be transformed into each other.

The *Book of Changes* includes sixty-four hexagrams—each with its figure, name, and explanation—and three hundred and eighty-four explanations of lines.[2] *Commentary on the Book of Changes* includes the "Treatise on the *Tuan*," "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams," "The Great Appendix," "Supplementary to the *Tuan* and *Yao* on the First and Second Hexagrams," "The Orderly Sequence of the Hexagrams," "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams," and "Treatise on the Hexagrams Taken Promiscuously According to the Opposition or Diversity of their Meaning." "Treatise on the *Tuan*" discusses the names, meanings, and explanations of the sixty-four hexagrams. "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams" provides the names, meanings, and explanations of the component lines of the sixty-four hexagrams. "The Great Appendix," a general introduction to the *Book of Changes*, summarizes the basic ideas presented in the *Yi*. "Supplementary to the *Tuan* and *Yao* on the First and Second Hexagrams" explains the hexagrams of *Qian* and *Kun* and presents a basic idea of lines. "The Orderly Sequence of the Hexagrams" explains different combinations and orders of the sixty-four hexagrams. "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" records things related to and symbolized by the eight trigrams as well as their basic principles and changes. "Treatise on the Hexagrams Taken Promiscuously According to the Opposition or Diversity of their Meaning" demonstrates relations between different hexagrams (Jin & Lü, 2005: 623–637).[3]

[2] "The use of the number nine" and "use of the number six" separately included in "Qian" and "Kun" can be grouped into explanations of lines, making the number three hundred and eighty-six.

[3] It is generally believed the title "Explanation on Relations Among Different Hexagrams" originates from its "disorderliness." However, Liao Mingchun considers it a treatise that reveals the attributes of sixty-four hexagrams in the introduction of The Yi. In this treatise, there are thirty-two pairs, among which Qian and Kun, Xiaoguo and Zhongfu, Li and Kan, and Daguo and Yi are opposite each other. Other hexagrams are also related. As such, the treatise reorders the hexagrams and explains their meaning by pointing out their relationship with each other. Its major premise is the opposition between "strength" and "tenderness" in Qian and Kun, indicating that everything on earth

It is unclear when *Zhouyi* was first introduced; however, the present book favors Yu's idea that *Zhouyi* was shaped in the Shang and Zhou dynasties (Yu, 2016: 3). It is generally believed that King Wen provided the explanation of the hexagrams and the Duke of Zhou provided that of the lines. This means the explanations of hexagrams and lines are not the achievement of one person but a product of years of accumulated efforts. The recording and sorting of different divinatory words has also contributed to its formation. It is argued that Confucius compiled *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, though analysis by both ancient and modern scholars indicates the book of commentary was not finished by one person but by later Confucians. In the late Warring States Period, or the Qin and Han dynasties, this work took the shape of a complete book (Li, 1978: 292–297).

It is incontestable that *Zhouyi* originates from divinatory activity. It also serves as a source of Chinese culture, exerting great influence. In "the Thirteenth Year of Duke Cheng" of *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, it was written that "sacrifices and wars are the most important things for a nation" (Yang, 1990: 861). Sacrifices and wars are so significant that divination is required to predict the destiny of a country. Thus, divination in the Shang and Zhou dynasties extended beyond forecasting personal gains. "As to the well-being of a country, explanations and predictions are underpinned by an understanding of past examples and the management of rulers. In this sense, divinatory officials responsible for providing such explanations are conversant in the things of the past and in thinking about the rule of a country. Therefore, recordings of divination and the explanations of divinatory words about future destinies are significant as historical documents and philosophical literature. Valuable thoughts gathered from a long period of history are thus maintained" (Liu, 2006: 2). "The Thirteenth Year of Duke Ding" in *The Spring and Autumn Annals* records the "official of divinity, official of sacrifice, official of divination, official of astronomy and history" (Yang, 1990: 1536) and relevant materials. These posts are established for different purposes. The "official of divinity," with knowledge about the history of immortals, undertakes the cultural task of delivering messages to immortals on behalf of the people attending sacrifices. The "official of sacrifice" is responsible for managing temples and sacrifices and is thus equipped with knowledge about clans and their rules. The "official of divination" takes charge of religious events such as observing and reading hexagrams and is familiar with the philosophies and perceptions of the universe that treat mankind and the world as a whole. The "official of astronomy" administers documents and observes celestial phenomena, through which the philosophy of mankind and the universe as a whole as well as traditional knowledge of history can be advanced. An overview of these posts improves our understanding of their familiarity with history. In Pre-Imperial literature, the "official of divinity" and "official of astronomy" are frequently combined. Thus, we infer that there is no clear division in the functions of the officials of divinity, sacrifice, divination, and astronomy. The "official of astronomy is responsible for recording literature along with managing sacrifices and divination. This mostly hereditary post is established

reinforces or counterbalances everything else. In a word, this treatise focuses on discussing strength and tenderness rather than exploring the inner structures of hexagrams (Liao 2001: 344–347).

to manage literature, enabling these officials to be so knowledgeable—whether in astronomy, geography, history, medicine, augury, or horoscope—that they serve as the most important consultants. Judging from astronomical evidence and that of human affairs, they can foretell the good or ill luck of the future. In this sense, they form a think tank while giving forecasts" (Tong, 2006: 125). Thus, divination participants and the officials of astronomy were intellectuals versed in culture and history. As such, their notes and comments on divination are significant. Compilers of the *Book of Changes* in later generations meticulously sorted different parts and carefully placed them in order, gradually rendering *Zhouyi* more systematic.

As Yi-ology progressed, especially through *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, the fields involved in such research gradually transferred from divination to philosophy and culture. The *Yi* started as a book of augury, including the historical and cultural conceptions of ancient people and simplistic dialectical thoughts such as the ways in which things develop and change and unity of the opposites of *yin* and *yang*. Theoretical explanations included in "Explanations on Qian and Kun," "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams," and "Treatise on the *Tuan*," which are included in *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, have made relevant studies logical and philosophical. Ancient people also imbued the book with their philosophies and worldviews. Gradually, the *Yi* moved beyond a book of augury because of its characteristics as a philosophical work.

The compilers of *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* conclude that "sages attempt to awaken people and make them act kindly to each other. They combine teaching lessons with telling stories […] *Zhouyi* conveys meaning through divination. This book aims to enlighten people about worldly affairs by exploring the law of Heaven" (Ji, 1997a, 1997b: 3). Sages endeavor to teach people lessons through storytelling. *Zhouyi*, in comparison, imparts wisdom through divination: the act of predicting the heavens' ways increases knowledge about human activities. The heavens' ways, as mentioned in *Zhouyi*, are advanced in the thoughts of the *Tao* of later ages, while Confucian thoughts are built on its illustrations of human activities. The two schools of thought reinforced each other, providing endless nourishment for the development of Chinese culture.

2.1.2 Collecting Images by Observing Objects

The system of signs used in *Zhouyi* has gradually been formed through discoveries in the real world, life experiences, accumulation of other experiences, identification of laws, reflections, deletions, and additions. The book represents a crystallization of the wisdom of generations of ancient Chinese people. Reportedly, Fuxi, King Wen, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius all contributed to refining this book. If so, how did Yi-ology form through constant summarization and becoming increasingly abstract? "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 196) states that "the sages set forth the diagrams, inspected the emblems contained in them, and appended their explanations. In this way, the good and bad were made clear." According to Kong Yingda, a scholar from

the Tang Dynasty, "when sages design hexagrams, they usually take into account the form of objects. Thus, hexagrams are set in accordance with objects in life" (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 261) "The Great Appendix" states that "sages can identify disorderly things in nature and present them in images. These images are those of real objects" (Chen, 2014: 200); thus, "images" are generated. Therefore, a hexagram is designed to indicate the shape and characteristics of things. This explanation reveals the point at which ancient people began to apply abstract signs. Wang Mingyu supports this view, stating that "mankind went through a long period of history before they consciously got rid of practical restraints to deal with abstract signs" (Wang, 2004: 5). This seemingly simple process exhibited a leapfrog development in thinking in abstract terms. The forming of hexagrams indicates the ancient people's improved abilities to use simplified signs for complicated things: the semiotic function of abstraction.

The most detailed and vivid explanation of the origin of hexagrams is included in the latter half of "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 201), "In ancient times, when Fuxi had come to the rule of all under heaven, looking up, he contemplated the brilliant images exhibited in the sky, and looking down, he surveyed the patterns shown on the earth. He contemplated the ornamental appearances of birds and beasts and the different suitabilities of the soil. Near at hand, in his own person, he found things for consideration, and the same at a distance in things in general. From this, he devised the eight trigrams to show the attributes of the spirit-like and intelligent, and to classify the qualities of the myriads of things." Here, two important concepts are mentioned, "contemplating images" and "surveying patterns." Gong Pengcheng (2005: 23) noted that "contemplating images means observing objects and heaven. Surveying patterns refers to understanding how 'images' are generated and classified. Pattern, the principle of forms, also refers to people's actions. Images are discovered in different objects, or everything in the universe." The process of sign construction, which includes contemplating images and surveying patterns, is followed by the process of showing "the attributes of the spirit-like and intelligent" and classifying "the qualities of the myriads of things." The function of signs manifests in "showing" and "classifying." Quotations in the *Annotation of the Yi* indicate that images can be collected from heaven and the patterns identified on earth. Thus, hexagrams have been drawn from a wide range of images. The ornamental appearances of birds and beasts and different suitabilities of the soil are observed, indicating the meticulous patterns adopted by hexagrams. In an all-encompassing way, hexagrams represent all things on earth. In *Correct Meaning of Zhouyi*, the ears, eyes, nose, and mouth can be seen in the sentence "near at hand, in his own person, he found things for consideration" (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 298). However, in the saying, "the same at a distance, in things in general," wind, thunder, mountains, and lakes serve as sources. Note that instead of simply depicting "images," people's subjective thoughts are instilled into these images. In other words, an object, be it human, animal, or material, carries no meaning until it is endowed with symbolic meaning. Only by transforming things, living or lifeless, into entities with symbolic meaning can a society with organic culture better understand the world. A move toward understanding, even if it does not last long, is better than no attempt at all. In the next part of this article, the author

analyzes how collecting images by observing objects, a process of thinking abstractly to form signs, is put into place as manifested in *Zhouyi*.

Observing objects in heaven comes first. The distant and mysterious heaven is the first thing that would have come into ancient people's views when they observed objects in nature. What images are included in "heaven"? Li Daoping (1994: 621) of the Qin Dynasty quoted Xun Shuang of the Eastern Han Dynasty, who stated, "*Kan* and *Sun* represent thunder and wind; *Li* and *Khan* sun and moon." Li Daoping explained that "wind, thunder, the sun, and the moon all come from heaven. Thus, it is said that we 'observe objects in the heavens'" (1999:621). Imitation of objects in heaven can be identified in the Yi in explanations of hexagrams, explanations of lines, *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, "Treatise on the *Tuan*," "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams," and others. For instance, the fifth line of Qian (Chen, 2014: 141) reads, "the flying dragon is in heaven." "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 145) reports, "vast is the 'great and originating power' indicated by Qian! All things owe to it their beginning: it contains all the meaning belonging to heaven." "Treatise on the *Tuan*" is designed to explain hexagrams, giving the names thereof first, followed by their explanation. The meaning of hexagrams is thus illustrated through their names. The symbols, attributes, and patterns of hexagrams serve as major sources of explanation. The sentence "vast is the 'great and originating power' indicated by Qian" implies that Qian collected images of heaven. Heaven, with clouds roaming and rain falling, enables plants to grow on earth and water to flow endlessly. In "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 145), Zhun reads, "the violent thunder and heavy downpour contribute to the growth of plants." In the hexagram figure, *Kan* is on top and *Zhen* at the bottom. The former symbolizes thunder and the latter water. *Kan* is beneath *Zhen*, so the rain will come down with claps of thunder, wetting the earth and bringing vigorous life to it. In discussing Xu, the "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams" (Chen, 2014: 146) states that "clouds in the sky forebode the act of waiting." In the hexagram of *Xu*, *Qian* is at the bottom and *Kan* on top. *Qian* represents heaven and *Kan* clouds. Clouds in the sky mean impending rain, but a period of waiting is required. Thus, "clouds in the sky" is interpreted as the act of waiting.

Second, observations of laws on earth should be mentioned. It was not in the distant and mysterious sky but on earth that ancient people led their lives and other lives have bred endless future generations. Thus, it was natural for ancient people to observe laws on earth. The first line of *Kun* (Chen, 2014: 143) explains, "treading on frost forebodes the formation of freezing ice." The passing of summer and coming of winter is reflected by the forming of frost and ice. This in itself is a gradual process from the slightest nuance of change to obvious ones, illustrated not through explicit words but through images. The second line of *Kun*, "straightness, squareness, and greatness" (Chen, 2014: 143), refers to images observed on earth. Li Jingchi, a scholar who studies the *Yi*, considers that "straightness, squareness, and greatness present a shallow understanding of the earth, because far beyond that, the earth is level-grounded, all-reaching, and boundless" (Li, 1981: 6). The third line of *Kun* reads, "its subject keeping his excellence under restraint, but firmly maintaining it" (Chen, 2014: 144). In Li Jingchi's view, this represents an observation that the earth

is charmingly beautiful and abundant with resources. We can also infer that many hexagrams are collected in *Kun* that contemplate images and survey patterns on earth (Li, 1981: 6). As another example, "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 146) includes the passage, "*Meng* means dangers at the foot of a mountain. Thus, *Meng* also indicates stopping at the sight of dangers." As such, the full meaning of *Meng* is stopping at the sight of unexpected dangers at the foot of a mountain. However, "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams" (Chen, 2014: 146) states that "*Meng* refers to a spring coming from the foot of a mountain." This is another example of how the laws of the earth are observed.

Third, some hexagrams include imitations of birds and beasts. The character *wen* 文 (literally character or literature) is described in *shuowen jiezi zhu*[4] (hereafter referred to *Shuowen*) as "interlaced strokes" (Duan, 2006: 425). The interweaving of different colors is similar to the decorative patterns on birds and beasts. Considering the ways in which images are represented in hexagrams and lines, the sixth line of the hexagram of *Dazhuang* (Chen, 2014: 170) states that "the ram is butting against the fence, and is unable either to retreat or to advance as he would fain do." This form implies the situation of being caught in a fix. The first line of the hexagram of *Mingyi* (Chen, 2014: 172) states, "its subject, in the condition indicated by *Mingyi*, flying, but with drooping wings." According to Zhang Zhenglang (2011: 113), the sixty-four hexagrams in the silk manuscript unearthed in the Han Tombs of Mawangdui prove that "drooping wings" should be "drooping left wings." It is not a good omen when the left wing of a wailing bird is injured. In the hexagram of *Weiji* (Chen, 2014: 194), an explanation of the hexagrams explains, "a young fox has nearly crossed the stream when its tail gets immersed." We see from this that great things, such as the heavens, earth, wind, clouds, and thunder, and small things, such as an injured bird and a fox with a wet tail, can all become objects that provide sources for images.

Fourth, at a closer distance, the body becomes a source for images. "Body" is generally taken as the "human body." It is assumed that ancient people would not have ignored their bodies while observing things in the universe. In fact, they were most familiar with their bodies. Expounding the sentence "at a short distance, images will be collected from the body" (Chen, 2014: 201), we may forget the corresponding sentence "at a long distance, people will collect images from objects" (Chen, 2014: 201). When images are collected from objects far away from us, it does not mean that images collected from close objects are abandoned. In terms of "collecting images from the body," it is worth discussing whether we collect images from the "human body" or also from things close to our body. The discussion below touches on this question.

The second line of *Zhun* (Chen, 2014: 145) reads, "Its subject distressed and obliged to return; even the horses of her chariot seem to be retreating. Not by a spoiler is she assailed, but by one who seeks her to be his wife." A crowd of people riding on horses are moving to and fro, but they are not robbers. They are the carriage team for the meeting of the bride. The sixth line (Chen, 2014: 145) states, "Its

[4] 说文解字注, literally translated as *Annotations to Explanation and Study of Principles of Composition of Characters.*

subject with the horses of his chariot obliged to retreat, and weeping tears of blood in streams." When the bride successfully joins the team, she will cry out loud. The fourth line of the hexagram of *Bi* (Chen, 2014: 161) states, "The place occupied by the fourth line, divided, affords no ground for doubt; not as a robber, but as intent on a matrimonial alliance, he will in the end have no grudge against him." The burning sun and galloping horses with people riding on their backs who are not robbers but people going to retrieve the bride are all scenes from real life. The explanation of the hexagrams of *Lü* (Chen, 2014: 150) states, "One happens to tread on the tail of a tiger, which to his surprise, does not bite him." This form is derived from real-life experiences and used metaphorically to indicate dangerous situations that do not result in terrible outcomes. According to the second line of Tai, "One who can bear with the uncultivated will cross the He (Yellow River) without a boat, and does not forget the distant" (Chen, 2014: 151). How can a person cross the river without a boat? With a gourd fastened to his waist, one does not need to worry about drowning when he jumps into the river. This is another scene from real life.

In the hexagram of Shihe (Chen, 2014: 160), it is stated, "In union by gnawing, there will be good fortune." Kong Yingda adds the annotation that "the jaws and the mouth between them are kept open by something in them. Let that be gnawed through. The mouth will close and the jaws will come together by force, as represented by gnawing; that is, by legal constraints" (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 100). Here, legal constraints are compared to the closing of a mouth and coming together of jaws. Images are collected "near at hand, in one's person." The explanation of lines in this hexagram also indicates the process of enforcing legal punishment, "The first line, undivided, shows one with his feet in the stocks and deprived of his toes. The second line, divided, shows one biting through the soft flesh, and going on to bite off the nose" (Chen, 2014: 160). This represents a slave being punished because of his wrongdoings. His toes are cut off, and he is in fetters. Another slave crossed his line to eat meat and his nose was cut off. These are images collected from the human body. The hexagram of Yi[5] (Chen, 2014: 164) states, "We must look at what we are seeking to nourish, and by the exercise of our thoughts seek the proper aliment." As Yi represents countenance, it becomes a sign. Another case is the hexagram of Gen. From the first to sixth line, images are collected from the human body including toes, legs, the waist, chest, abdomen, and head (Chen, 2014: 185).

Fifth, at a great distance, images are collected from things in general. As mentioned, there is a corresponding relationship between "collecting images from the body" and "collecting images from objects." When it is not enough to collect images from the body, people will naturally look farther to widen the range of images and enrich the content of meaning.

For example, in the second line of the hexagram of Daguo (Chen, 2014: 165), "a decayed willow produces shoots." The fifth line says, "a decayed willow produces

[5] Not to be confused with *yi* and *Yi*, Yi is the name of a hexagram. It shares the same pronunciation with the two terms mentioned above, although with a different tone (the second tone), and a different Chinese character (頤). In order not to confuse the readers, none of the names of the hexagrams are not italicized.

flowers" (Chen, 2014: 165). When the withered plant begins to revive, we expect the vitality of life to be brought back to earth. The fifth line of the hexagram of Gou (Chen, 2014: 179) describes "a medlar tree overspreading the gourd beneath it. If he keeps his brilliant qualities concealed, a good issue will descend from heaven." A plump gourd falls from the medlar tree, indicating that everything comes easily at the right time. The first line of the hexagram of Ge (Chen, 2014: 182) states that "its subject is bound with the skin of a yellow ox." Thus, ox leather is a metaphor for sturdiness.

In the explanations of hexagrams, the explanations of lines, the "Treatise on the *Tuan*," and "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams" of *Zhouyi*, we see how images are collected from a wide range of objects. In particular, "laws observed on earth" and "images collected from the body" are most prominent. This is because ancient people living on earth were most familiar with their own bodies and surrounding objects.

Images are collected from a wide range of objects. According to Chen Daosheng, the contents of images involve ethics, direction, objects, plants, colors, and attributes. They are also related to shapes, minerals, climates, utensils, agriculture, trade, water conservancy, smells, illnesses, weapons, transportation, and mysterious culture. "We can conclude that the eight trigrams are related to many things in our lives. They come into place for the purpose of 'exchanging thoughts' and 'passing on experience.' Their adoption and popularity are largely due to the fact that they fulfilled the function of words, or characters in the Chinese context" (Chen, 1987: 71). As signs capable of helping people "exchange thoughts" and "pass on experiences," the eight trigrams are like characters in the way they work. However, questions still remain. The eight trigrams have certain character features and functions, but why did the ancients insist on collecting images? Why did they not depend exclusively on characters for conveying thoughts? Why did the trigrams not develop into characters?

2.1.3 Neglecting Images Once Meaning is Manifested

Zhouyi collects images from things in heaven and on earth, and things people need in daily life. Thus, concepts and thoughts are vividly reflected. Images are the things that can be seen, but the meaning hidden in these images is what matters. Not all information receivers can be that alert, because many people focus so much on the images that they are unaware of the meaning conveyed. Thus, ancient people constantly changed the objects from which they collected images to prevent a certain object from representing an everlasting meaning. Qian Zhongshu presented a detailed analysis of this idea in his *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters*, stating that images in *Zhouyi* provide a neat way of introducing concepts. If meaning can be conveyed, it is not necessary for the concept to be indicated by one form only. In his articles, Zhuang Zhou often applies different metaphors to "avoid allowing readers to understand meaning through only one metaphor […] When there are numerous images and metaphors, people can better understand meaning without

being dominated by only one metaphor" (Qian, 2008: 22). In "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 141), it is written, "Vast is the great and originating power indicated by Qian! All things owe to it their beginning: it contains all the meaning belonging to the name heaven." Here, heaven is compared to *Qian*, but *Qian* does not equal heaven or strength. "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams" writes, "Heaven, in its motion, gives the idea of strength. The superior man, in accordance with this, nerves himself to ceaseless activity" (Chen, 2014: 141). Heaven is always in motion. This is used to imply the meaning of Qian. In "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams," "Qian can be regarded as heaven, round things, the emperor, father, jade, metal, coldness, ice, bright red, strong horse, old horse, thin horse, horse of mixed fur colors, and fruit hung on trees" (Chen, 2014: 207). According to Qian Zhongshu (2008: 23), "Images of the *Yi* contain meaning. They serve as an attraction to delay visitors and encourage them to look further into images." A form has the function of conveying meaning. Collecting images from multiple objects can prevent receivers from being constrained by the images themselves. This also allows the meanings of images to be conveyed more accurately and flexibly. Note that no matter how varied these images are, they must be expressed in language. For example, signs used in designing hexagrams, explanations of hexagrams, explanations of lines, and "Treatise on Symbolism of Hexagrams" together with the signs of the eight hexagrams should all rely on linguistic expression. In this sense, we see how the structure of "word, image, and meaning" is established. Wang Bi (Lou, 1980: 609) writes:

> Images are intended to express meaning. Words are employed to describe images. Images can best express meaning and words can best describe images. Words are generated by images so that images can be established in exploring words; images are born for meaning. Thus, meaning can be obtained by seeking images. Meaning is completely contained in images and images are made known by words. The one who uses words can make images shown. When that happens, words can be forgotten. Images always carry meaning and images can be ignored when meaning is manifested [...] The one who uses words is not the one who has obtained images; the one who understands images is not the one who knows meaning. Image is generated by meaning, and the existence of images is not necessarily the existence of meaning. Words are fostered by images and the existence of words is not necessarily the existence of images. However, the one who understands meaning will not care about images; the one who obtains images will no longer pay attention to words. The obtaining of meaning means forgetting about images. The acquiring of images means discarding the words […] If the motion of things is to be expressed, the image of horses is not necessarily the only symbol. If the tenderness of things is to be manifested, the image of cows is not the only way to show meaning. If the line indicates tenderness, one should not limit his thinking by comparing the *Kun* hexagram to cows. If the line implies motion, one should not adhere to the *Qian* hexagram as horses.

Images exist to express meaning, and words can describe images. Images are a necessary route to express meaning effectively, and words are required to make images understood. Readers, after understanding images through words, can discover the meaning conveyed by these images. Thus, words can be dismissed once images are properly understood, and images can be dismissed once meaning is obtained. In this regard, Wang Bi emphasized that images are unimportant once meaning is manifested. The following pattern explains how the three elements work:

word—image—meaning

Qian—heaven—motion

"Images" can be divided into two groups: "real" and "unreal." In *Correct Meanings of Zhouyi*, "real images include 'water on the ground, Pi' and 'wood on the earth, Shang.' They are tangible things and are called real images. Unreal images include 'heaven in the mountain,' 'wind from the fire,' and other intangible things. Real and unreal images contain meaning, and they as a whole are called 'images'" (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 11). Images collected from *Zhouyi* either come from real things or those imagine, that is, conjured up by the mind. They are adopted to "convey meaning to people." "Word, image, and meaning" serve as the basic structure of *Zhouyi*, which adopts hexagrams rather than words to present images and express meaning. The whole book constitutes a system of establishing images to convey meaning. Readers of *Zhouyi* are expected to discard images once they obtain their meaning.

As illustrated above, certain procedures are followed to collect images from objects and understand the meanings of these images. The procedure is shown below:

Figure 2.1 shows that objects are processed by the mind when images of meaning are added to images of objects. Thereafter come images of hexagrams and of words, which gradually complete their signification. By constantly improving their practice, divination participants contribute to the making of a Yi-ological sign system. Hexagrams and explanations of lines and hexagrams are obtained from the act of augury. A system of metalanguages (for more, see 1.3) is then consulted to reveal meaning and predict the future. Huang Shouqi (Huang & Zhang, 2001: 21) stated, "The sixty-four hexagrams, the lines divided or undivided, and their explanations are all 'symbols' with particular images. While the hexagrams and the lines imply what is conveyed, the explanations of hexagrams and lines describe it. Images and written descriptions reinforce each other to indicate the symbolic meaning of hexagrams and lines." *The Yi*'s original purpose is divination, which is why words are not sufficient for explanation. In contrast, one form can be interpreted from multiple perspectives because these signs are not designed to have only one meaning. The first line of *Kun* (Chen, 2014: 143), "Its subject treads on hoarfrost. The strong ice will come by and by," explains how things develop from their initial stages. Different divination participants may obtain different meanings from these images. The prevention of blunders in cases of disasters, accumulation of one's power, and understanding a bigger picture from its details can all be considered hidden meanings of this sentence.

Correct Meanings of Zhouyi highlights that given that *Zhouyi* is a book of augury, the eight trigrams are symbols of everything on earth. This book is a bridge to divine morality and an embodiment of every creature's emotions. By abstracting the nature of things and showing it through hexagrams that represent different things, signifiers of signs in the eight trigrams are differentiated with the signified indirectly differentiated. From a phaneroscopy viewpoint, fixed nature is understood from different contents and changing meanings. Here, the nature of things and inner links between them are stressed. Essentially, the eight trigrams represent the images of eight natures. In "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" (Chen, 2014: 207), they

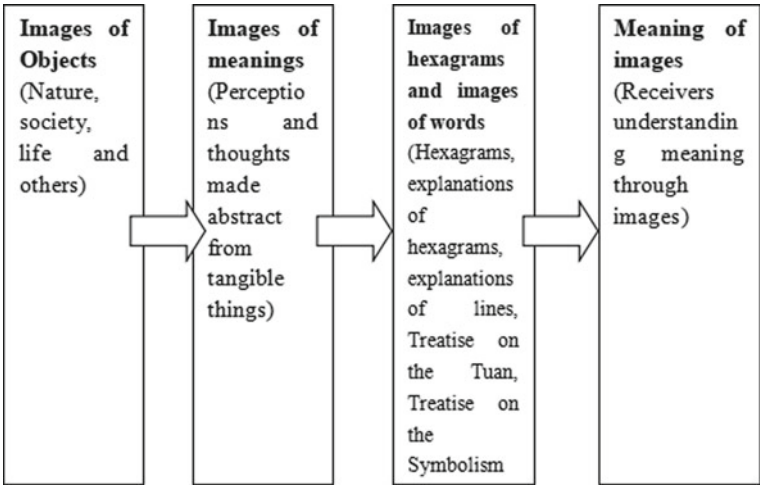
Images of Objects (Nature, society, life and others)
Images of meanings (Perceptions and thoughts made abstract from tangible things)
Images of hexagrams and images of words (Hexagrams, explanations of hexagrams, explanations of lines, Treatise on the Tuan, Treatise on the Symbolism
Meaning of images (Receivers understanding meaning through images)

Fig. 2.1 The process of obtaining meaning and discarding images

are described as follows: "*Qian* is (the symbol of) strength, *Kun* of docility, *Zhen* of stimulus to movement, *Xun* of penetration, *Kan* of what is precipitous and perilous, *Li* of what is bright and catching, *Zhen* of stoppage or arrest, and *Dui* of pleasure and satisfaction." Things are countless and there is great variety on earth. In abstracting the nature of things, one sees that it is fixed, as in "strength, docility, and movement." This abstraction allows a true understanding of the inner links among things. Complexities can be understood through knowing simple truths. In this sense, we can conclude that the birth of signs in the *Yi* represents a great leap in human thinking patterns. By observing the world, the ancient Chinese developed a unique way to generate, transmit, and accept meaning, giving birth to a way of expression with Chinese characteristics.

2.2 Initial Construction of the Sign System in *Zhouyi*

As mentioned above, ancient people's thoughts about signs are recorded in the *Book of Changes*, which is why it is considered a classic Confucian work and the most ancient book of augury in China. When practicing divination, people roast the bones of animals. The textures on bones after they have been burnt become evidence of good or bad omens. People also use alpine yarrow herb, according to certain rules, to create a hexagram. By consulting explanations of hexagrams and lines in the *Book of Changes*, people can determine whether their fortunes will be good or bad. This ancient method of augury exists in China and other foreign countries. The Mesopotamians may have also relied on certain visible things to reveal the meanings

of other things. Augury signs used by the ancient Greeks are regarded as tools of communication between deities and mankind.

As a system of signs, *Zhouyi* has structural significance. To determine its meaning, each hexagram should be examined as a whole, not simply as a collection of different lines. For instance, in the hexagram of Sui (Chen, 2014: 156), it is stated that "there will be great progress and success. But it will be advantageous to be firm and correct. There will then be no error." This constitutes a comment on the whole hexagram, rather than on any individual lines. Furthermore, hexagrams can be converted into each other. Every hexagram consists of six divided and/or undivided lines. Changes in lines generate different hexagrams, resulting in different meanings. Third, the system is noted for self-adaptability. The images in *Zhouyi* were obtained through careful observation of objects. Therefore, the images are either iconic or indexical. These images are vivid but ambiguous in conveying meaning. Thanks to this ambiguity, there is always the possibility for new meanings to be incorporated. For the specific meaning, syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics can be analyzed.

2.2.1 *Syntactic System of* Zhouyi

A syntactic reading of *Zhouyi* describes how different signs are combined. *Yin* and *yang* are two basic elements of the *Yi* and represented by symbols, like "- -" and "—," respectively. Eight signs are generated by combining and arranging these symbols in different orders. For example, ☰ is called *Qian*, ☷ *Kun*, ☵ *Kan*, ☴ *Sun*, ☶ *Khan*, ☲ *Li*, ☵ *Kan*, and ☱ *Tui*. These eight trigrams represent eight natural phenomena: heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain, and water pool. The combination of two trigrams can generate sixty-four trigrams, which represent everything on earth. Signs in *Zhouyi* are abstract, demonstrating the ancient people's ability to understand and simplify complexities.

Here, *yin* and *yang* in the *Yi* are shown under certain rules, "There is the Grand Terminus, which produced the Two Elementary Forms. Those two Forms produced the Four Emblematic Symbols, which again produced the Eight Trigrams" (Chen, 2014: 199–200). This explains the rules under which the signs of the *Yi* are established. The Great Terminus represents "unity," the primeval state of chaos when *yin* and *yang* are not divided and the universe is an integrated whole. Then, the universe is divided into heaven and earth, which are represented by the *yang* and *yin* lines, respectively. When heaven and earth exist, four seasons are naturally generated, which are represented by minor yang, senior yang, minor yin, and senior yin. *The Way to Heaven of the Book of Changes* states that "*yi* originates from the Great Terminus, which is divided into heaven and earth. The four seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter are naturally put in place. *Yin* and *yang* are two sides of every season. Thus, eight trigrams are produced. The birth of eight trigrams means the way of heaven and earth is set. Also, images such as thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain, and water pool are generated" (Zheng, 1937: 4–5). "The Four Emblematic Symbols" are respectively divided and the eight trigrams created, with four of them being *yin*

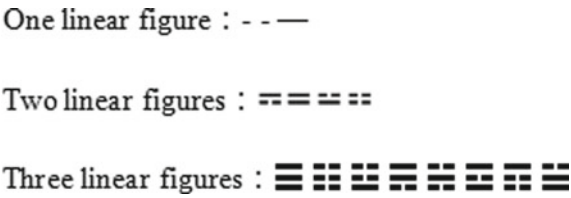

Fig. 2.2 Evolution of linear figures

trigrams and the others being *yang*. This is what "the Four Emblematic Symbols generate the Eight Trigrams" means. Signs of the Eight Trigrams are thus formulated. It is argued (Zhu, 2011: 25) that "the eight trigrams are constituted by two signs, "- -" and "—." In particular, these linear figures are combined and the eight trigrams are generated" (Fig. 2.2).

Random combinations of three lines, *yin* or *yang*, produce the eight trigrams. Among them, *yang* trigrams include *Qian*, *Zhen*, *Kan*, and *Gen*. *Yin* trigrams include *Kun*, *Xun*, *Li*, and *Dui*. *Qian* is formed with three *yang* lines and naturally becomes a trigram of complete yang. *Kun* consists of three *yin* lines and is thus called a trigram of complete yin. *Zhen*, *Kan*, and *Gen* are composed of one *yang* line and two *yin* lines. Each of these trigrams has five strokes, and an odd number of strokes indicates a *yang* trigram. For *Xun*, *Li*, and *Dui*, there is one *yin* line and two *yang* lines. Each of these trigrams has four strokes, an even number, making it a *yin* trigram. This is what is meant in "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 202) by "in the *yang* trigrams (or those of the undivided line), there are more of the *yin* lines, and in the *yin* trigrams (or those of the divided line), there are more of the *yang* lines. What is the cause of this? It is because the *yang* lines are odd (or made by one stroke), and the *yin* lines are even (or made by two strokes)."

A line can be placed at the top, in the middle, or at the bottom of a trigram. Variations of *yin* and *yang* lines produce the eight trigrams. The combination of any two of the eight trigrams will make a hexagram. Essentially, there are sixty-four hexagrams. Kong Yingda noted that "for sixty-four hexagrams, the combination of two trigrams will bring out either an upside-down hexagram or a complete change. Upside-down hexagrams represent two hexagrams in different positions. *Zhun*, *Meng*, *Xu*, *Song*, *Shi*, and *Bi* fall into this category. For a complete change of hexagram, a different position can only make one hexagram. *Qian*, *Kun*, *Kan*, *Li*, *Daguo*, *Yi*, *Zhongfu*, and *Xiaoguo* are in this group" (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 334). This explains how "upside-down hexagram pairs" and "complete-change hexagram pairs" are formed. For example, in the hexagram of *Zhun*, with *Kan* at the top and *Zhen* at the bottom, the first is the *yang* line, the second the *yin* line, the third the *yin* line, the fourth the *yin* line, the fifth the *yang* line, and the sixth the *yin* line. If this is reversed, it becomes the hexagram of *Meng*, with *Gen* at the top and *Kan* at the bottom. The first is a *yin* line, the second a *yang* line, the third a *yin* line, the fourth a *yin* line, the fifth a *yin* line, and the sixth a *yang* line. *Xu* and *Song*, and *Shi* and *Bi*, are both examples of pairs of hexagrams that can turn into each other when turned upside-down. "Complete-change hexagram pairs" means that the same pattern will be maintained if the hexagram is turned upside-down. For example, in *Kan*, the top and bottom

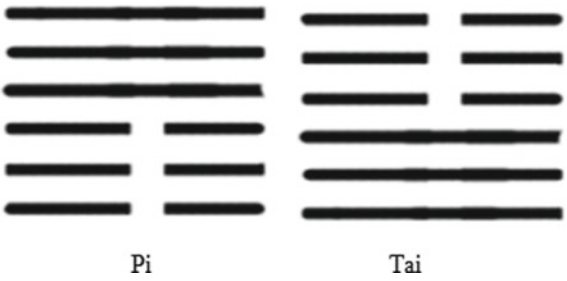

Fig. 2.3 Comparison of *Pi* Hexagram and *Tai* Hexagram

trigrams are both *Kan*. If this hexagram is turned upside-down, it will remain the same. To make some changes in the *Kan* hexagram, if all the *yang* lines are turned into *yin* lines and all the *yin* lines into *yang* ones, the *Li* hexagram will be obtained with a *Li* trigram at both the top and bottom. Other similar cases include pairs such as *Qian* and *Kun*, *Kan* and *Li*, *Yi* and *Daguo*, and *Zhongfu* and *Xiaoguo*. Special combinations exist such as *Pi* and *Tai*. In the hexagram of *Pi*, *Qian* is at the top and *Kun* at the bottom. In the hexagram of *Tai*, *Kun* is at the top and *Qian* at the bottom (Fig. 2.3).

By turning the hexagram upside-down, the two hexagrams can transform into each other. In addition, a complete change of the lines in one hexagram can result in the other hexagram. In the sixty-four hexagrams, more pairs were included, such as *Sui* and *Gu*, *Jian* and *Guimei*, and *Jiji* and *Weiji*. These are simultaneously "upside-down hexagram pairs" and "complete-change hexagram pairs."

Random combinations of the eight trigrams bring about sixty-four hexagrams, "The eight trigrams having been completed in their proper order, there were in each the (three) emblematic lines. They were then multiplied by a process of addition till the (six) component lines appeared. The strong line and the weak push themselves each into the place of the other, and hence the changes (of the diagrams) take place" (Chen, 2014: 201). The eight trigrams symbolize heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain, and a water pool. Under the rule on the interaction of *yin* and *yang*, sixty-four hexagrams are thus produced. The sixty-four hexagrams must also follow certain rules, which are most obviously reflected in "The Orderly Sequence of the Hexagrams" (Chen, 2014: 208), "When there were heaven and earth, then afterward all things were produced. What fills up (the space) between heaven and earth are (those) all things. Hence, (*Qian* and *Kun*) are followed by *Zhun*." The existence of heaven and earth has created conditions in which things can grow; thus, *Zhouyi* begins with *Qian* and *Kun*. It is all creatures that fill heaven and earth; therefore, *Zhun*, with the meaning of filling something, follows the first two hexagrams. In *Shuowen*, *Zhun* (屯) is explained as "the initial stage of growth for grass and trees. Things at this stage encounter difficulties. The horizontal stroke crosses the character and represents the land" (Duan, 2006: 21). Then, there is the hexagram of *Meng*, which means the sprouting of things. The order of the sixty-four hexagrams is explained in "The Great Appendix," which offers a syntactic interpretation of *Zhouyi*.

2.2.2 *Semantic System of* Zhouyi

The system of the meaning of signs in *Zhouyi* is concerned with the meanings of hexagrams and explanations of lines. The referent meaning in this book of augury is mainly produced through the collection of images of objects. "Sages are able to describe the shape of objects from the mess in the world and create similar images to represent them" (Chen, 2014: 200). As mentioned, the character 易 *yi* means disorder. The world is naturally a mess without order. With the development of philosophy, things can be categorized through ceaseless observation and analysis. When "categorization becomes consolidated, there will be a trend of transferring meaning into signs" (Liu, 1996: 123). "Form" takes the shape of objects in this phase; therefore, the relationship between signs and objects in *Zhouyi* is not arbitrary but a relation of resemblance. In Peircean semiotics, it is a relation of iconicity.

In the making of *Zhouyi,* people imitate objects and obtain images therefrom. These images are then used as signs, be they *yin* or *yang*, to represent things on earth. Signs and objects are connected by motivation. The second section of "The Great Appendix" states that "in ancient times, when Fuxi had come to the rule of all under heaven, looking up, he contemplated the brilliant images exhibited in the sky, and looking down, he surveyed the patterns shown on the earth. He contemplated the ornamental appearances of birds and beasts and the different suitabilities of the soil. Near at hand, in his own person, he found things for consideration, and the same at a distance in things in general. From this, he devised the eight trigrams to show the attributes of the spirit-like and intelligent, and to classify the qualities of the myriads of things" (Chen, 2014: 201). Fuxi observed heaven and earth, birds and beasts, grass and trees, and the human body. The eight trigrams were then created to represent these observations. In other words, the eight trigrams are symbolic archetypes of everything on earth because they include the characteristics of different kinds of things manifested in abstract signs. Things with the same nature can be represented by the same hexagram. Through observing and analyzing things on earth, ancient people designed eight signs to represent eight types of materials. The "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" extends these eight materials. *Qian* represents horse, *Kun* cow, *Zhen* dragon, *Xun* rooster, *Kan* pig, *Li* pheasant, *Gen* dog, and *Dui* goat. Therefore, the eight trigrams can also represent eight animals, "*Qian* represents the head, *Kun* the abdomen, *Zhen* the feet, *Xun* the buttocks, *Kan* the ears, *Li* the eyes, *Gen* the hands, and *Dui* the mouth" (Chen, 2014: 207). In this sense, the eight trigrams also refer to different parts of the human body. Broadly, things with strength have a pictorial representation of Qian, "*Qian* refers to heaven, roundness, emperor, father, jade, gold, coldness, ice, bright red, strong horse, old horse, thin horse, horses of mixed fur colors, and fruits on the tree" (Chen, 2014: 207). Here, it can be inferred that the signs in *Zhouyi* have so many interpretants that they are open to unlimited semiosis. Recipients may skip the objects and go directly to the interpretants. We thus infer that signs in the *Yi* carry very rich meaning that is easy to extend and interpret without taking note of objects.

2.2.3 *Pragmatic System of* Zhouyi

The first section of "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 200) states that "A later sage was able to survey the motive influences working all under the sky. He contemplated them in their common action and special nature to bring out the standard and proper tendency of each. He then appended his explanation (to each line of the diagrams) to determine the good or evil indicated by it. Hence, these (lines with their explanations) are denominated Imitations (the Yao)." The world is very complex, and the signs in *Zhouyi* imitate the images of things. Social system and order can also be included and prompted. People can predict their destiny by consulting *Zhouyi*. Simply put, *Zhouyi* explores the rule of heaven and order of society. Images of objects in this book constitute an all-inclusive world.

Different hexagrams and lines in *Zhouyi* show the truth of life. The first section of "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 196) states, "The sages set forth the diagrams, inspected the emblems contained in them, and appended their explanations. In this way, the good fortune and bad (indicated by them) were made clear. The strong and the weak (lines) displace each other, and produce the changes and transformations (in the figures)." *Yin* and *yang* lines influence each other and make up different hexagrams, which can be used to predict the future. In ancient times, *Zhouyi* was used to guide the lives of ordinary people, highlighting its pragmatic function. First, considering the composition of hexagrams, sixty-four of them are formed by random combinations of the eight trigrams. In *Zhun*, the top trigram is *Kan* ☵ and the bottom is *Zhen* ☳. The former symbolizes water and the latter thunder. Here, the striking of thunder and pouring of rain are not favorable for going outside. Thus, "Any movement of advance should not be lightly undertaken" (Chen, 2014: 145) is written as an explanation for this hexagram. Furthermore, everything on earth is reinvigorated when "thunder activates and rain wets them" (Chen, 2014: 206). Covering the aspect of things growing on the earth and people starting to fulfill great deeds, *Zhun* also implies the beneficial condition of "attaining accomplishments in the imperial court" (Chen, 2014: 145). There are six positions in every hexagram. The first, third, and fifth are *yang* positions, and the second, fourth, and sixth are *yin* positions. If *yin* and *yang* lines are in their respective positions, the hexagram is considered to be "in the right position" (Chen, 2014: 169). The hidden meaning of this is prosperity. Conversely, if the *yin* and *yang* lines are not in their corresponding positions, these hexagrams are "not in the right position" (Chen, 2014: 147), indicating misfortune. In the hexagram of *Jiji*, the upper trigram is *Kan* and the lower is *Li*. The first, third, and fifth positions are all occupied by *yang* lines and the second, fourth, and sixth positions by *yin* lines. As the *yin* and *yang* lines are all in their right positions, this is called *Jiji*, meaning the smooth development of things. In contrast, in the hexagram of *Weiji*, the lower trigram is *Kan* and the upper is *Li*. The *yin* and *yang* lines are not in the right position, which is called *Weiji*, meaning failure of one's cause. In conclusion, the meanings of the *yin* and *yang* lines are judged from their positions within the hexagrams. Good or ill fortune is also manifested in the positions of lines. The meaning of hexagrams depends on the position of the *yin* and *yang* lines. This reflects the characteristics

of pragmatics, which aims to examine the relations between signs and sign users. Considering people, time, and location, this is how the referent meaning of signs and its significance are obtained.

2.3 *Wei*, *Zhong*, *Shi*, and *Dang*: Metalanguages of *Zhouyi*

According to Zhao Yiheng, metalanguage is a set of codes or rules of encoding and decoding in meaning generation and interpretation (Zhao, 2011: 226). *Zhouyi* is a system with a unique structure, which means that a set of metalanguages is required to serve as an explanatory code. A metalanguage "is indispensable to making any kinds of texts of signs understood. Any kind of meaning expression through signs, once in the form of dissemination of meaning, needs a corresponding metalanguage to provide an explanatory code. The condition under which meaning can exist can be explained by another system of signs (e.g., another kind of language). Metalanguages serve as the key to the completion of meaning expression in texts" (Hu & Zhao, 2012: 253–254). In *Zhouyi*, a system is formed through a combination of hexagrams, explanations of hexagrams, explanations of lines, and comments. This system can reveal rules, predict the future, and determine good or ill fortune. Under these conditions, divination participants can explain hexagrams with the assistance of the explanations of lines. Metalanguages are also required to transform explanation into prediction.

In terms of the function of the eight trigrams, the first section of "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 199–200) states, "There is the Great Extreme, which generates the two elementary forms, which are made into the four emblematic symbols, which give birth to the eight trigrams. The eight trigrams predict good or ill fortune, with the assistance of which a great course can be accomplished." "The Great Extreme" is unity, which also represents the integrity of the universe. "The two elementary forms" are rules under which *yin* and *yang* alternate, move, and change or replace each other. The random combination of the two elementary forms generates minor *yin*, minor *yang*, senior *yin*, and senior *yang*. These four emblematic symbols, combined with *yin* and *yang* lines, transform into the eight trigrams. Through rearrangement and combination, the eight trigrams are transformed into sixty-four hexagrams. Divination participants can determine whether good or ill fortune lies ahead, benefiting their future causes and enabling them to accomplish great goals. Much has been said about the sequence and arrangement of the hexagrams in *Zhouyi*, particularly in "The Orderly Sequence of the Hexagrams" and "Treatise on the Hexagrams Taken Promiscuously." Certainly, there is something in this argument. Liu Dayun (Liu, 2010: 22) argues these explanations are not to be discarded as useless. Images originate from divination and life experiences and, therefore, are not without philosophical value. "The Great Appendix" is the most ancient written material explaining the *Book of Changes*. Considering its closeness in time to the great work, the interpretations and explanations in "The Great Appendix" are more trustworthy than those provided by later scholars. Notably, in both the book and its commentary, position,

middle, time, and appropriateness are considered important codes in communicating ideas. In other words, these terms constitute the main metalanguages of *Zhouyi*, allowing readers to grasp what would otherwise be unintelligible.

2.3.1 Wei*, the Position*

The renowned British linguist John Lyons provides an insightful discussion on the relationship between context and meaning in semantics, where he emphasizes the important roles played by contextual variables in generating and interpreting meaning. He focuses on six categories: (1) the role played by a participant and his status, (2) the space and time in which participants find themselves, (3) degree of formality of the situation in which communication takes place, (4) the medium appropriate to the situation, (5) how to make utterances appropriate to the subject matter and importance of the subject matter as a determinant in the selection of one dialect or one language over another, and (6) how to make their utterance appropriate to the province or domain to which the situation belongs. Meaning is generated and received in particular contexts. As such, contextual variables play an essential role in the production, diffusion, and reception of meaning. In his discussion, Lyons focuses on the relationship of meaning generation and the temporal and spatial positions, emphasizing that the participants must know their position in space and time because this greatly impacts the generation and reception of meaning (Lyons, 1977: 573–585).

In observing objects and designing hexagrams, the ancient Chinese people attached great importance to the relationship between position and meaning, which are well reflected in *Zhouyi*. For example, the constantly changing location of wild geese in the hexagram of *Jian* can have different meanings. In the hexagram of *Guai*, injuries on different parts of the human body indicate different destinies. In the hexagram of *Gen*, images are collected from the bottom to the top of the human body, while different parts of the body are related to different meanings. The connection between spatial locations and body parts emphasizes the role of location in space and time in generating and explaining meaning. Offering an interpretation of the *Book of Changes*, *Commentary on the Book of Changes* attaches great significance to the relationship between space and meaning. One example is the analysis of position.

In explaining the symbolism of the eight trigrams, "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" (Chen, 2014: 206) states that "in ancient times, when the sages made the *Yi*, it was with the design that its figures should be in conformity with the principles underlying the nature of men and things, and the ordinances for them appointed by heaven. With this view, they exhibited in the figures the way of heaven, calling the lines *yin* and *yang*; the way of earth, calling the weak or soft and the strong or hard; and the way of men, under the names of benevolence and righteousness. Each trigram embraces those three powers; and being repeated, its full form consists of six lines. A distinction was made of the places assigned to the *yin* and *yang* lines, which were variously occupied, now by the strong and the weak images, and thus, the figure of

each hexagram was completed." Here, two important concepts are mentioned: the "three powers" and "six positions" (Chen, 2014: 206). In each hexagram, every two neighboring lines are identified as a pair, and there are three pairs in total. From the bottom to the top, the three pairs represent earth, man, and heaven, respectively. "Six positions" refer to the location of each line in the hexagram. Take *Qian* for example (Chen, 2014: 141):

> In the first line, undivided, the dragon lays hidden. It is not the time for active doing.
>
> In the second line, undivided, the dragon appears in the field. It will be advantageous to meet with the great man.
>
> In the third line, undivided, the superior man is active and vigilant all day, and in the evening, he is still careful and apprehensive. The position is dangerous, but there will be no mistakes.
>
> In the fourth line, undivided, as if he were leaping up, but still in the deep. There will be no mistakes.
>
> In the fifth line, undivided, the dragon on the wing in the sky. It will be advantageous to meet with the great man.
>
> In the sixth line, undivided, the dragon exceeds the proper limits. There will be occasion for repentance.

From the bottom to the top, the first and second lines are located at the "position of earth." They indicate "the dragon lays hidden, it is not the time for active doing." "The dragon appears in the field, it will be advantageous to meet with the great man" implies that the dragon is beginning to move on the earth. The third and fourth lines are located at the "position of mankind": "The superior man is active and vigilant all day, and in the evening, is still careful and apprehensive. The position is dangerous, but there will be no mistakes." In this sentence, we see that the superior man refers to people of a certain status. Great cause requires their tireless efforts and vigilant attention. In the fourth line, we see "as if he were leaping up, but still in the deep." The dragon has leaped from the sea and can make great progress in his career. The earlier effort will pay off now. The fifth and sixth lines are located at the "position of heaven." For example, the fifth line symbolizes "the dragon on the wing in the sky," which corresponds to the status of the emperor. The sixth line represents the limits of development where "there will be occasion for repentance." "Three powers" (*san cai* 三才) indicates that hexagrams are divided into three parts: earth, heaven, and mankind. Different locations in space call for different ways of doing things. More important than the position of the "three powers" is the positions of the trigrams and lines, as different combinations and positions may generate different meanings.

A detailed analysis of every line will reveal deeper meaning. Every line is located at a certain position and the six lines represent six different situations, the resolution of which requires adopting different approaches. In discussing the meanings generated by changing line positions, Huang Qishou points out that "the first line represents the budding state of things, and the strategy for it is avoidance of active doing. The second line indicates the initial performance on stage; thus, some efforts are required for progress. The third line shows there is certain progress in one's career and one

should be alert to avoid misfortune and mishaps. The fourth line symbolizes new progress; thus, precaution is necessary for proper judgment of the situation. The fifth line indicates the accomplishment of one goal, when arrogance and overacting should be avoided. The sixth line stands at the top and represents the point where things have become so extreme that the opposite will inevitably come" (Huang and Zhang 2001: 42).

Regarding the hexagram position, according to Gao Heng, "The position of the trigram is reflected in every hexagram. Two trigrams form one hexagram with one trigram on the top and the other at the bottom. The sixty-four hexagrams can all be divided into upper and lower trigrams" (Gao, 2010: 17). Sixty-four hexagrams are formed through the arrangement and combination of trigrams. All the hexagrams are composed of an upper and lower part. *Meng* comprises *Kan* and *Gen*. The former is at the bottom and the latter at the top. *Wuwang* comprises *Zhen* and Qian. The former is at the bottom and the latter at the top. All sixty-four hexagrams are made up this way. Therefore, "for every hexagram, the trigram and position of the trigram are taken into account. The position of the trigram constitutes an organic part of a hexagram. In 'The Treatise on the *Tuan*' and 'The Treatise on the Symbolism of Hexagrams,' the position of the trigrams and their patterns are studied, which is also the case in 'The Great Appendix' and 'Treatise on the Hexagrams Taken Promiscuously'" (Gao, 2010: 17). Therefore, it is common for the position of a trigram to become evidence for the interpretation of the hexagram.

Examining how the eight trigrams are formed, the Great Terminus generates the two elementary forms, then the four emblematic symbols, and then the eight trigrams. *Yin* and *yang* lines in different orders form the eight trigrams. *Qian* is filled with all *yang* lines, and *Kun* is filled with all *yin* lines. In addition, *Zhen*, *Kan*, and *Gen* are known as *yang* hexagrams. In "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" (Chen, 2014: 207), it is recorded that "*Zhen* shows a first application (of *Kun* to *Qian*), resulting in getting (the first of) its male (or undivided lines), and hence is called 'the oldest son.' *Kan* shows a second application (of *Kun* to *Qian*), resulting in getting (the second of) its male (or undivided lines), and hence is called 'the second son.' *Gen* shows a third application (of *Kun* to *Qian*), resulting in getting (the third of) its male (or undivided lines), and hence is called 'the youngest son.' On the other hand, *Xun*, *Li*, and *Dui* are called *yin* hexagrams. *Xun* shows a first application (of *Qian* to *Kun*), resulting in getting (the first of) its female (or divided lines), and hence is called 'the oldest daughter.' *Li* shows a second application (of *Qian* to *Kun*), resulting in getting the second of its female (or divided lines), and hence is called 'the second daughter.' *Dui* shows a third application (of *Qian* to *Kun*), resulting in getting (the third of) its female (or divided lines), and hence is called 'the youngest daughter'" (Chen, 2014: 207). In most cases, the *yin* trigram is at the bottom and the *yang* trigram at the top, which can be called an auspicious position. Conversely, there will be misfortune. As this simple summary will not do for all explanations, Gao Heng divided the hexagrams into six types (Gao, 2010: 17).

First, there is a vertical relationship between the two component trigrams, which means that in the things these trigrams represent, one is beneath the other. For example, in *Meng*, the upper trigram is *Gen* and the lower is *Kan*. The lower *Kan*

represents water and the upper *Gen* mountain. "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams" states that "spring comes from the foot of the mountain, and this is the meaning of *Meng*" (Chen, 2014: 146). Here, spring represents water.

Second, one trigram may be inside the other. In this case, the things trigrams represent are also inside or outside one another. In particular, the lower trigram is inside the upper trigram. The inner trigram of *Mingyi* is *Li* and the outer trigram *Kun*. According to "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 172), "the inner trigram indicates civility and the outer one humility." *Li* is a trigram of civility and *Kun* a trigram of humility.

Third, one trigram is in front of the other. The upper trigram is known as the front trigram and the lower the back trigram. In the hexagram of *Xu*, the front trigram is *Kan* and the back one *Qian*. "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 145) states that "danger is at the front and the strong person will not be hampered by it." Kan implies the meaning of danger and Qian strength. The strong person will not be forced into a corner when encountering danger.

Fourth, one trigram may be parallel to the other. For example, in Zhun, the upper trigram is Kan and the lower one Zhen. In "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 189), it is written that "the striking of thunder will bring forth a large amount of rain." *Zhen* (Zhen) represents thunder and *Kan* water or rain. The intermixing of thunder and rain shows they are parallel to each other.

Fifth, a hexagram may be composed by two identical trigrams. Such hexagrams include *Qian*, *Kun*, *Zhen*, *Xun*, *Kan*, *Li*, *Gen*, and *Dui*. According to Gao Heng, there are only nine explanations in this regard. For instance, for *Xun*, "Treatise on the *Tuan*" states that "The double *Xun* shows how, in accordance with it, (governmental) orders are reiterated." *Xun* stands for wind. *Commentary on the Book of Changes* compares the orders of the emperor to wind. Accordingly, this hexagram means that the emperor reiterated his orders. The relationship between the two component trigrams is one of repetition.

Sixth, two component trigrams are the same and should be considered a united whole. There is no sense of repetition in the hexagram, and it symbolizes a single thing. There are only six cases of this kind. For example, in the explanations of the entire diagrams, *Qian* is to be understood as the heaven only and *Kun* as the earth.

For the position of lines, there are *yin* and *yang* positions. *Yang* positions refer to the first, third, and fifth line locations, as odd numbers represent *yang*. The second, fourth, and sixth lines stand in *yin* positions because even numbers represent *yin*. "Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams" (Chen, 2014: 206) states, "*Yin* and *yang* are divided and intermixed in a hexagram. Thus, six positions are an important element of the *Book of Changes*." In many cases, when the *yin* line is in the *yin* position and the *yang* line in the *yang* position, there will be good luck. Hexagrams are formed with both *yin* and *yang* lines, except for *Qian* and *Kun*. Thus, it is natural that some *yin* lines are in *yan*g positions and *yang* lines in yin positions. In this case, ill or good fortune may manifest.

When *yin* and *yang* lines are in the right positions, it is similar to the hexagram of *Jiji*, which has *yang* lines in the first, third, and fifth positions and *yin* lines in the second, fourth, and sixth positions. The upper trigram of *Jiji* is *Kan* and the lower

is *Li*. *Kan* is a *yang* trigram and *Li* a *yin* trigram. The *yang* trigram being on the top and the *yin* one on the bottom indicates the right position of *yin* and *yang*. Thus, the meaning is "correct, firm" (Chen, 2014: 194). In "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 194), *Jiji* is described as a situation in which "the strong and weak lines are correctly arranged, each in their appropriate place."

The most exact case of lines not being in their proper places is *Weiji*. In this hexagram, the lower trigram is *Kan* and the upper is *Li*. From the first to sixth lines, no lines are in their proper places. The *yin* trigram is on top and the *yang* trigram at the bottom. This misplacement corresponds to the meaning of the trigram: an unfinished course. Essentially, the positions of the trigrams and lines should be considered in determining the meaning of a hexagram.

Actually, the relationship between *yin* and *yang* lines and *yin* and *yang* positions is more complicated. Regarding the hexagram of *Jiji*, "Treatise on the Tuan" (Chen, 2014: 194) states, "There has been good fortune in the beginning: the weak (second line) is in the center. In the end, there is a cessation of effort and disorder arises: the course (that led to rule and order) is now exhausted." This sentence clarifies that the second line, the *yin* line, is in the *yin* position. Coincidentally, this line is at the center of the lower trigram, indicating good luck. The fifth line, a *yang* line, is located at the center of the *yang* trigram. This is the position in which the emperor stands. Over this line, there is a *yin* line with nowhere to retreat. This means that an emperor is dominated by a feudal official, as the *yin* line seems to symbolize. As the idiom goes, having no alternative, the official will "make every effort to overthrow the emperor." This situation will lead to misfortune for the emperor and "disorder in the end." One can conclude that in the *Book of Changes*, apart from "the position," "the middle" is also an important metalanguage that helps explain the meaning contained in hexagrams.

2.3.2 Zhong*, the Middle*

Zhong 中 (literally, "the middle"), is an important concept in *Zhouyi* and its commentary. It refers to a special position at the center. According to the author's statistics, this word appears sixteen times in the *Book of Changes*. In the *Zhun* hexagram, the third *yin* line is explained as "one following the deer without the guidance of the forester, and only finding himself in the midst of the forest" (Chen, 2014: 145). Here, "in the center" or "in the middle" indicates a location in space. In the Song hexagram, it is stated that "when the slave is captured, people can have some leisurely time in between for rest. In the end, the slave escapes when people take no notice of him" (Chen, 2014: 147). In this sentence, "in between," indicating a period of time, also embodies the meaning of "the middle." In the *Shi* hexagram, the second line is explained as "the leader in the midst of the host. There will be good fortune and no error. The king has thrice conveyed to him the orders (of his favor)" (Chen, 2014: 148). *Shi* means the army. The middle (center) of the army refers to the leader. Here, "the middle (center)" indicates a kind of status. According to Jin Jingfang and Lü

Shaogang, generals leading an army are subjected to the orders of the emperor. When engaged in combat in the field, they command the army and have strong dominating power. Therefore, "in the midst of the host" should be understood as the relationship between the emperor and the general. The latter must have a strong dominating power to command the army. However, if the power becomes excessive, the general will forget the duties of an imperial official. Therefore, only by being humble while maintaining the power can the leader be thrice conveyed the orders of the king's favor. Here, "in the center" or "in the middle" should be interpreted as being in the middle, neither too humble nor too haughty.

If it is still a concept related to time, space, and status in the *Book of Changes*, "the middle" develops into a type of metalanguage used to interpret the *Book of Changes* in *Commentary on the Book of Changes.* "The middle" appears twenty-one times in the first section and twenty-seven times in the second section of "Treatise on the Tuan." Further, it appears twenty-eight times each in the first and second sections of the "Treatise on the Symbolism of Hexagrams." Overall, "the middle" appears one hundred and four times in "Treatise on the Tuan" and "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams." This high frequency is noteworthy. In fact, "the middle" constitutes an important metalanguage for interpreting the *Book of Changes*, "The middle means not being partial, neither going too far nor not going far enough" (Li, 2002: 18). It has evolved from referring to the central position in space to covering the acceptability of the ways to handle things.

In the *Book of Changes*, "the middle" originally refers to the second and fifth lines. Considering the position of the trigrams, the second line is at the center of the lower trigram and the fifth line at the center of the upper trigram. The second line is in the central position. If the *yang* line is at the central position, it will be called a "strong center" (Chen, 2014: 146). If the *yin* line is at the central position, it will be called a "soft center" (Chen, 2014: 205). If the *yin* line stands at the second and the *yang* line at the fifth, it is considered to be at both the central and proper positions, indicating a very auspicious omen.

For example, regarding *Xu* in "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 146), "There will be brilliant success, and with firmness there will be good fortune. This is shown by the position of the fifth line in the place assigned by heaven, and its being the correct position for it, and in the middle." In "Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams" (Chen, 2014: 147), the explanation of Xu is "the appliances of a feast and the good fortune through being firm and correct are indicated by the position in the central and correct place." Thus, Hsu has a very auspicious meaning. The metalanguage that showcases this good omen is "in the place assigned by heaven, and its being the correct position for it, and at the middle." In Xu, Kan is at the top and Qian at the bottom. Qian represents heaven. The fifth line, a *yang* line, is at the center of Kan. The situation of the *yang* line at the yang position is called "central and correct." The fifth line is where the emperor stands with *Qian* at a lower place. Therefore, when man is in an imperial position, this will bring forth the meaning of centeredness and correctness. In this case, metalanguage can generate good meaning.

In the explanation for *Lü* in "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 150), "The fifth line is strong, in the center, and in its correct place. Its subject occupies the God-given position, and falls into no distress or failure; his action will be brilliant." In this hexagram, *Dui* is at the bottom and *Qian* at the top with the fifth *yang* line in the center of the upper trigram. The *yang* line indicates strength and the fifth position is that of the emperor; thus, it is called "strong, in the center." The upper trigram means heaven with the fifth line in the center of heaven, so it "occupies the God-given position." The tendency of being strong and in the center will enable a bright future for one's course.

In *Dayou* (Chen, 2014: 154), "The weak line has the place of honor and is grandly central, and the strong lines above and below respond to it. Hence, its name is *Dayou* (having what is great)." The lower trigram is *Qian* and the upper one *Li*. The sixth line is a *yin* line in the center of the upper trigram. The *yin* line in a *yang* position is not a good omen, but "Treatise on the *Tuan*" provides a different explanation. The lower trigram is *Qian*, which represents heaven, the respectable. The fifth line is divided, representing an imperial official, and stands in the central position. This corresponds to the line in the second position, which is undivided. Their corresponding relationship can contribute to having what is great.

According to the real cases of these lines, we see that "the middle," indicating the central position, becomes a standard for the right or wrong of meaning, an essential kind of metalanguage for interpreting hexagrams. When the central position is considered, improper positions can be overlooked, transforming danger into a good situation. Gao Huaimin argues that if position and time are compared to one's objective encounters, "the middle" can be deemed the subjective efforts one can make to compensate for a deficiency. In this case, a misplacement or a wrong time may also bring about good fortune. Therefore, "the middle" can be considered a balm for misplacement and wrong timing (Gao, 2007: 127). In this aspect, one sees that ancient people did not just passively accept that which nature gave them. Instead, they took the initiative to make a change. Humans are semiotic animals. In using signs, they are expected to know "the middle" or degree to which their signification will be most effective. Only in this way can their efforts be better appreciated.

2.3.3 Shi*, the Time*

"Position" and "the middle," as metalanguages of the Book of Changes, provide perspectives of space and people's capabilities when the meanings of hexagrams, lines, and comments are interpreted. Clearly, changes in the spatial position take place with the passage of time. When analyzing changes in spatial positions, ancient people noted the influence of changes in time on meaning expression. Meanings will change with changes in time and/or space. In *Meng*, "prosperity is manifested by proper time and position" (Chen, 2014: 146). Here, "time" and "the middle" are both considered, which means the right position in space and proper time. In reality, determining meaning should be based on the intersection of time and space.

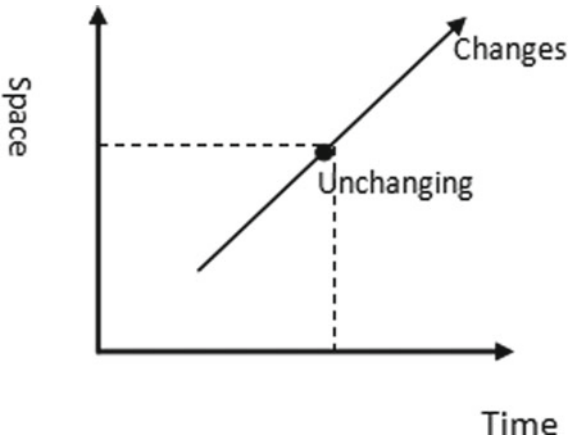

Fig. 2.4 The unchanging state and its relation with time and space

As *Zhouyi* is about change, it conveys a philosophical idea that things will change as time and space change. "Change" is everlasting and ontological. The "unchanging" state of things represents the intersection of a specific time and space (Fig. 2.4).

Only in a relatively stable and "unchanging" state can we understand the nature of things. Therefore, as "time" refers to a temporal background, specific meanings could be produced when time and space are anchored. Further, trends of development can be predicted. In fact, the changes of six lines in every hexagram can be considered significant against specific temporal backgrounds. The rule of development and change can also be predicted. Therefore, Wang Bi (Lou, 1980: 604) discusses how hexagrams can change along with the passing of time.

Hexagrams have a background of time. Lines represent changes in accordance with time. There can be auspicious and unfortunate times. One will actively behave himself or maintain humbleness to hide his splendor. There are complex and simple hexagrams, and explanations for them also vary. At first glance, one hexagram may be deemed auspicious, but it can turn out to be ill-fortunate. When obstacles seem hidden inside, it can also turn out to be a good opportunity. Therefore, hexagrams can be turned upside-down so that new meanings can be generated. Lines can change from time to time. If a hexagram is named, then good or ill fortune will be consistent with it. Time is another element for a hexagram and its stillness or motion depends on time. From names, hidden ills or good fortunes can be told. From the factor of time, motion or stillness can be judged. The change of a hexagram includes these two aspects. One cannot misplace good or ill fortune at another time. One cannot exceed the limit of stillness or motion. If the time is wrong, it will be no great mistake. If properness is misunderstood, it is only a mishap. By observing lines and contemplating changes, one can fully understand changes.

There are sixty-four hexagrams in the *Book of Changes*. Every hexagram symbolizes certain things, phenomena, and concepts that are produced, changed, and developed against a certain backdrop. This backdrop is called "time," which accompanies the generation of the meaning of hexagrams. As such, the sixty-four hexagrams

symbolize sixty-four contexts. The three hundred and eighty-four lines represent the pattern of development against the backdrop of "time." Although *Zhouyi* deals with abstract ideas, these are manifested via signs whose images are taken from objects, meaning that actual "images" from life are applied as metaphors for ideas. Observers may understand the meaning and forget about the images. According to examples in the *Yi*, images are frequently interpreted with resort to "time." According to statistics collected by the author, the character "time" appears fifty-seven times in *Zhouyi*. Therefore, "time" represents a basic metalanguage for interpreting images.

As stated in "Supplementary to the *Tuan* and *Yao* on the First and Second Hexagrams" (Chen, 2014: 141–142), "In the third line, undivided, the superior man is active and vigilant all the day, and in the evening, is still careful and apprehensive. The position is dangerous, but there will be no mistakes." Confucius mentioned that "the superior man will elevate his moral character and build his career. If he maintains loyalty, he will improve his moral character. If his deeds are in accordance with his speech, he can develop a prosperous career. Before he conducts his behavior, he knows deep inside what should be achieved. At the same time, he keeps doing so throughout his lifetime. When these qualities are possessed by a superior man, he can maintain humbleness at a high position and be calm when he is surpassed by many. Thus, the saying, 'the superior man in the evening is still careful and apprehensive. The position is dangerous, but there will be no mistakes'." Here, Confucius is quoted to explain the third line of *Qian*. One can judge that a superior man can observe the objective discipline of things and law of changes. They can do the right thing at the proper "time." In a different "context," the superior man will adjust his action according to the time and no harmful results will be produced, as shown in the following quotations:

> The superior man endeavors to improve his moral character and complete his course. If he wants to advance only at the proper time, there will be no errors. (Chen, 2014: 142)

> The dragon shows himself and is in the field—the time (requires him still) to be unemployed. (Chen, 2014: 142)

> "The superior man keeps active and vigilant all day" means keeping pace with time. (Chen, 2014: 142)

> What docility marks the way of *Kun*! It receives the influences of heaven, and acts at the proper time. (Chen, 2014: 144)

In this analysis, meaning is understood, law is discovered, ill or good omens are predicted, and the future is forecasted to avoid misfortune through the consideration of "time." The second section of "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 205) states, "The *Book of Changes*, in a word, can be claimed as a book of essence. The intermixing of six lines embody objects at that time." Kong Yingda (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 316) of the Tang Dynasty argues that "natural objects embody events. In each hexagram, six lines are combined with different orders. Each line indicates a different time and matter." Confucius also mentioned the first and second lines of Kun to reveal the indivisible integrity of time and things. Specific things correspond with specific times. This is an acknowledgment that an unchanging status is only

a relative status. It is actually a representation of tangible things at a specific time. On the other hand, the importance of meaning making through observing images is stressed. Meaning should be analyzed in certain contexts in which the images are collected.

To judge whether the development of things is in accordance with the laws of "time," conformity to and deviations from time are two major aspects. Conformity to time is regarded as a good omen in many cases and deviation from it a bad omen. The "The Great Appendix" (Chen, 2014: 201) writes that "people who are versed in changing are people who act in accordance with time." Kong Yinda (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 295) mentions that the changing of things should cater to the needs of time. In "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 146), "there is development at work in it, and its time of action is exactly what is right." "Development" is achieved because of the position at the right time and at the central place. "Treatise on the *Tuan*" (Chen, 2014: 176) states that "everything is the method of this increase proceeding according to the requirements of the time." Gao Heng (2010: 272) points out that "to act according to the requirements of the time will yield good results. Everything on earth will benefit from being in conformity with heaven. People should also endeavor to be in accordance with time for beneficial consequences."

In the hexagram of Sun, there is a highly intensive discussion about "time" (Chen, 2014: 175), "In sacrifice, two sets of *gui* (ancient food vessels) of grain may be presented: for these two sets of *gui* there ought to be a fitting time. There is a time when the strong should be diminished and the weak should be strengthened. Diminution and increase, overflowing and emptiness: these take place in harmony with the conditions of time." In this part, "time" is presented both concretely and abstractly. At a sacrificial ceremony, *gui* can be used as tools (Lou, 1980: 422). When simply presented to other people, they can be used in sacrifice on the right occasion. Kong Yingda (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 172) highlights that "the diminution of power should also take place in harmony with the conditions of the time." The act of diminishing the strong and strengthening the weak in sacrifice is transformed from actual practice to abstract analysis. The last sentence of "Treatise on the *Tuan*" points out that diminution and increase, overflowing and emptiness should be in accordance with "time." This abstract summary is applied in many fields. Jin Jingfang said that "mentioning overflowing and emptiness, apart from diminution and increase, actually enlarges the range of diminution and increase from human affairs to nature. 'Being in accordance with time' and 'taking place in harmony with the conditions of the time' are mentioned to clarify that entities as well as objects should observe this principle. Time, in this regard, has been endowed with general meaning" (Jin and Lü 2005: 325). It is consistent with the law of obtaining images from things both faraway and close at hand to move from specifics to abstract analysis, from the laws of human affairs to those of nature. In general, the meaning of things, their status, overflowing or emptiness, and laws of their development should take place in harmony with the conditions of the time. The hexagram designers hid "time" in hexagrams. Interpreters should exhibit these inner laws by stripping away the layers of meaning one by one.

2.3.4 Dang*, the Appropriateness*

In communicating meaning, a language serves as a tool when the object involved in the process is the subject. If the language is the subject under discussion, or in other words, if a language is used to discuss the language itself, then there will be languages at two different levels: one as the tool of the discussion and the other as the subject thereof. A metalanguage means the former. Actually, any sign text, be it on religion, etiquette, dance, gesture, painting, or sports, depends on a corresponding metalanguage for codes of interpretation as long as it aims to convey a certain meaning. Understood this way, a metalanguage is the key to the conveyance of meaning (Zhao, 2016a, 2016b: 227). The meanings of the emblematic symbols and explanations of the component lines in *Zhouyi* cannot be known unless interpreted with the help of its collection of metalanguages found in *Commentary on the Book of Changes*. The above-mentioned position, middle, and time are some of the major metalanguages in interpreting *Zhouy*i. Appropriateness is another noteworthy example. If the position, the middle, and the time only contribute to understanding meaning in terms of the factors of space, degree, and time, then "appropriateness" can be better viewed as a value judgment of the metalanguages discussed above, a higher metalanguage, or more specifically, a meta metalanguage.

In *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, "appropriateness" is often used with "position." It judges whether something is in an appropriate position. As mentioned earlier, there are differences in positions: some are higher and others lower, some are *yin* and others *yang*. There are different metalanguages for understanding positions. Gu Yanwu (2006: 14) believes that positions could be interpreted from the perspectives of the six component lines of a hexagram.

In discussing positions, *Commentary on the Book of Changes* has two views: "Therefore, the distinction of (the upper and lower trigrams and of the individual lines) as noble or mean is decided by the (relative) position (of the lines)." The fifth is the position of an emperor, while the second, third, and fourth are positions of his ministers. This is what is meant by "of the same quality but in different positions with respect to the fifth line." The first and sixth lines are known to be without positions. If a line is compared to a person, then the first line refers to one who has not served in a government while the sixth refers to hermits who have chosen to retreat from government services. Neither of these two lines refers to ministers. Therefore, the comment concerning the sixth position in *Qian* states, "The position is noble, but it is not that of office." This is also why when a comment is made concerning the sixth position in the hexagram of *Xu*, it says, "The occupant and the place are not suited to each other." The sages understand the connection between the beginning and end, and how (the indications of) the six lines (in the hexagram) are accomplished, (each) in its season. "A distinction was made (the places assigned) to the *yin* and *yang* lines, which were variously occupied, now by the strong and now by the weak images, and thus the figure (of each hexagram) was completed." Therefore, the position of a trigram or component line does not get its form from the position of human beings. Wang Bi clarifies this point. However, if one claims that for the first and sixth lines

there is no distinction of *yin* and *yang*, it will likely not make sense. After all, a one-sided view is not preferable. Rather, it must be understood that there is something on both sides.

Based on *Gu*, there are two language systems: one centering on human affairs and the other on the numerical position of the lines. From a human-centered perspective, the first line describes what things are like before something happens and the sixth line describes what things are like after something diminishes. Therefore, these two lines are without positions. Compared to persons, they are those who do not have an office and those who have resigned/retired from office. Hence, they are people without positions. If a hexagram itself is studied, all lines from the first and sixth are numbered and must therefore be counted. Otherwise, a hexagram cannot be properly described. In this sense, each line has a numerical position. The discussion above clarifies that two metalanguage systems are used to interpret the positions of the hexagrams: one human-centered and the other numerical-position-centered. Certainly, different metalanguage systems lead to different interpretations. The truth is that in *Commentary of the Book of Changes*, the metalanguages used are not static. This helps account for the fact that many people cannot know for certain what is conveyed when reading *Zhouyi*. To understand such a mysterious book, one must figure out its metalanguage systems. Only in this way can one familiarize oneself with the semiotic characteristics of hexagrams and component lines that aim to represent many with a few to control the complex with the simple. According to Zhao Yiheng (2012: 254), "Any attempt to interpret a sign text needs to be supported by a collection of metalanguages. A text does not exist on its own. It is a text when interpreted. This does not mean that the metalanguages used each time must be wholesome and stable. Every time he interprets a sign text, a recipient will use a temporary collection of metalanguages." When confronted with a hexagram, different recipients who adopt different temporary collections of metalanguages are not likely to come up with the same interpretation.

From a human-centered perspective, it is often not auspicious for a small man of low status to be in a position of an emperor, the fifth line. From a yin-yang perspective, if a *yang* line is in a yang position and a *yin* line in a *yin* position, then it will likely be a good omen. Otherwise, it will often forecast bad happenings. Statistics show that in the "Treatise on *Xiang*," "appropriate" or "inappropriate" are used thirty times to make a judgment of a hexagram: "appropriate" is used eight times and "inappropriate" twenty-two times. In the "Treatise on *Tuan*," "appropriate" or "inappropriate" are used eight times to make a judgment of a hexagram: "appropriate" is used five times and "inappropriate" three times.

An analysis of the statistics reveals general rules to follow in determining whether a hexagram is "appropriate" or "inappropriate." It is mostly inappropriate for a *yin* line to be in a *yang* position. Some examples are the divided line in the fifth position in the hexagram of *Shi*, in the third position in the hexagram of *Lü*, in the third position in the hexagram of *Yu*, in the third position in the hexagram of *Lin*, in the third position in the hexagram of *Shihe*, and in the fifth position in the hexagram of *Dazhuang*. It is mostly appropriate for a *yin* line to be in a yin position. Good examples are the divided line in the fourth position in the hexagram of *Lin*, of *Ben*,

and of *Jian*. It is mostly inappropriate for a *yang* line to be in a *yin* position. Examples here are the undivided line in the fourth position in the hexagram of *Guai*, of *Cui*, and of *Kun*. It is mostly appropriate for a *yang* line to be in a yang position. Examples include the undivided line in the fifth position in the hexagram of *Lü*, of *Pi*, of *Dui*, and of *Zhongfu*. There are also exceptions to the rules. An example is the undivided line in the sixth position in the hexagram of *Xu*. It is a *yin* line in a *yin* position, but the situation is inappropriate for various reasons. Similarly, in the case of the undivided line in the fifth position in the hexagram of *Shihe*, a *yin* line is in a yang position. However, it is considered appropriate. While rules are easy to understand, exceptions are not. What collection of metalanguages underlies these exceptions?

For the hexagram of *Xu*, the upper trigram is *Kan* and the lower *Qian*. The "Treatise on *Xiang*" explains the divided line in the sixth position, stating, "Though the occupant and the place are not suited to each other, there has been no great failure (in what has been done)" (Chen, 2014: 147). In most cases, it will be auspicious for a *yin* line to be in a *yin* position. However, in this hexagram, the conclusion is that it is inappropriate. The judgment is so confusing that some scholars challenge the reliability of the text (Gao, 2010: 80–82). Personally, I tend to trust the text and believe the different metalanguages involved in interpreting this line have led to the confusion.

From a human-centered perspective, for a divided line to be in the sixth position is similar to a person being in a position without a position, as Gu Yanwu held in the discussion above. From the numerical position-centered perspective, the sixth position is a position after all. This is why Wang Bi commented that "it is in a position without a position and therefore inappropriate" (Wang 1980: 247). The divided line in the sixth position is in a position without position (office). Therefore, it is inappropriate. Kong Yingda shares his view on this difficulty in the Correct Meaning of *Zhouyi*, holding that "the hexagram of *Xu* tells us that with a goal in mind, one has to keep a lot to oneself and it takes time to achieve success. The six component lines attempt to clarify human affairs with the help of images obtained from other things. Many different ways of interpreting different component lines have been put here at the same time." First, he admits that the hexagram of *Xu* is trying to make understood human affairs by borrowing images obtained from other things. As described in the analysis above, from a human-centered perspective, the first and last lines are without positions. However, from a numerical position-based perspective, the first and sixth lines have their respective positions. By saying that "many different ways of interpreting different component lines have been put here at the same time," Kong means that the different metalanguages of *Commentary on the Book of Changes* are simultaneously used. The synchronic use of different metalanguages is the reason for the confusion, or in semiotic terms, the shaping of an "evaluative vortex" (Zhao, 2016a, 2016b: 385).

Dang 当 or "appropriateness" as a metalanguage is worthy of discussion. The explanation of the hexagram of *Dun* says, "The strong (line) is in the ruling place (the fifth), and is properly responded to (by the second line). The action takes place

according to (the requirement of) the time" (Chen, 2014: 169). The hexagram of *Dun* is composed of the trigram of *Gen* and *Qian*: the former the lower part and the latter the upper part. "The strong (line) is in the ruling place" refers to the undivided line in the fifth position. This component line is undivided and therefore strong. The *yang* line is in a *yang* position, hence "the strong (line) is in the ruling place." In addition, the line is in the central position of the upper trigram. Considering that a *yin* line is in the central position of the lower trigram, the fifth line is believed to be properly responded to by the second line. "Time" is also a metalanguage in understanding *Zhouyi*, referring to the context in which meaning is generated. "The action takes place according to (the requirement of) the time." It tells us that one has to take into account the context to determine the meaning to decide the actions to take. This sentence must be interpreted with what follows it, "To a small extent it will (still) be advantageous to be firm and correct: (the small men) are gradually encroaching and advancing. Great indeed is the significance of (what is required to be done in) the time that necessitates retiring" (Chen, 2014: 169). Judging from the hexagram, the first two lines, or the lines representing the earth, are both *yin* lines; the third and fourth lines, representing the men, are both *yang* lines; and the fifth and sixth lines, representing the heaven, are both *yang* lines. *Yin* is weak, and *yang* is strong. The weak gradually encroaches and advances while the strong weakens and retreats. In the case of human affairs, this means that small men are becoming stronger each day while the power of great men is weakening. Under these circumstances, it is advisable to retire to protect oneself. Shang Binghe (1980: 160) says, "The reason for retiring is that retreating is required by the time. It is the time that necessitates retiring. If a person retreats too early, he will be ridiculed for being pretentious. Yang Guang of the Eastern Han Dynasty is a good case in point. If a person retreats too late, however, he will have been trapped by small men and can no longer stay away from danger. Liu Qin is a good illustration of such a situation." These two anecdotes illustrate that to decide when and to what extent to retreat, one has to consider carefully where he is in time and space. The above discussion indicates that when "appropriateness" is used with other metalanguages such as "position" and "time," we are more likely to make sense of *Zhouyi*.

In *Semiotics: Principles & Problems*, Zhao Yiheng (2011: 232) writes, "Metalanguages are collected to generate meaning. They do not aim to obtain the only 'correct' meaning. Are the meanings generated under the pressure of the collection of metalanguages correct, valid, or wrong? This kind of value judgment should be made with the assistance of a higher-level metalanguage." As metalanguages of *Zhouyi*, the position, middle, and time are contexts in which the meaning is generated, which offers interpretations of how meanings are to be received and valued. As these elements always constitute each other, the multiple codes or complexity of the metalanguages of *Zhouyi* cannot be neglected if we are to analyze in detail the meaning generation of this ancient book.

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Chapter 3
Confucian's Thoughts on Semiotics

Ideology is "a metalanguage for the evaluation of a culture" (Zhao, 2011: 233). In this sense, Confucianism, the official ideology of China since the Han Dynasty, has for thousands of years served as the metalanguage used to evaluate ancient Chinese culture and thought. However, in the Pre-Imperial Period, Confucianism was only one of a hundred schools of thought. Evidence is found in *Records of the Great Historian* by Sima Qian (1982: 3288–3289) and the *Book of Han* by Ban Gu (1962: 1728–1746). Despite the painstaking efforts of scholars of previous centuries, how Confucianism gained its dominance remains unknown. It is hoped that a semiotic approach to Confucian thought will shed new light on the myth.

3.1 Ethics of Rites and Music: Origin of Confucian Thought on Semiotics

One characteristic of Chinese civilization is its continuity: its development has never been interrupted. With the elucidation of later generations, many ideological theories of the Pre-Imperial Period in China have been shown to have "epochal" significance. Of these, Confucian political ethics has had the most profound influence on Chinese culture. From an ontogeny viewpoint, Confucian political ethics emerged from the rites and customs of primitive society, with content added or subtracted by the Duke of Zhou, a Confucian sage. The cultural signs of rites and music became political tools and the basic rule to maintain the social order of the Western Zhou Period. With the decline of the ruling class of the Western Zhou Period and rise of feudal princes seeking hegemony in a society with disintegrated rites and music, Confucius, the great teacher and practitioner, carried out a bottom-up reform of the system established by the Duke of Zhou. Contrary to the "upper class design" advocated by the Duke of Zhou, Confucius supported a moral discipline of individuals, from the underclass to the ruling class and to society as a whole, which eventually became the tradition of

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Confucian thought on semiotics that has dominated Chinese culture for thousands of years. A detailed analysis is presented below.

3.1.1 Social Conventions: Origin of the Rites and Customs of Primitive Society

The culture of rites and music is a major feature of Chinese civilization and is recognized as the essence of Chinese culture. Throughout history, the rulers of different dynasties have attached great importance to the social function of the indoctrination of rites and music. However, where does the semiotic meaning of "rites" come from? Thus far, academia has had mixed views on the issue. Yang Zhigang reveals at least five possibilities concerning the origin of rites, namely "customs," "human feelings," "sacrificial ceremonies," "ritual ceremonies," and "communication" (2001: 4–6). Considering that these arguments differ in their starting points, the availability of different theories is unsurprising.

From a semiotic perspective, these theories are not that different, because "customs," "human feelings," "sacrificial ceremonies," "ritual ceremonies," and "communication" all have a semiotic meaning in human society. As "semiotics is the study of meaning" (Zhao, 2013: 5), signs are necessary for the transmission and reception of meaning. In other words, the transmission and interpretation of all meaning would be impossible without signs. Meaning is "a fixed order based on which the reference of signs is encoded and interpreted by the user and the interpreter" (Yu & Ye, 1988: 216). Essentially, the social activity of human beings is a process of constantly creating meaning, standardization, and regulation. All human activities are related to signs. The creation and use of signs differentiate human beings from other animals. Therefore, human beings can be considered an animal species of signs. As any means of expression accepted by a society is based on collective habits and conventions, the creation and use of signs must be carried out within a certain social scope and in accordance with conventions.

Therefore, from a semiotics perspective, rites are part of ceremonial systems gradually established in the process of semiotic signification. Once established, these systems regulate people's sign-using behavior. Thus, the various viewpoints on the origin of rites are easier to explain. Regarding the theory of "customs," Liu Shipei and Lü Simian recognize that rites stem from the customary habits of human society, which differ over time and between regions. Liu Shipei proposes that "rites originated from customs in ancient times" (1997: 54), while Lü Simian believes that "rites originated from customs, yet differ in different times and regions" (1995: 45–46). Regarding the theory of "human feelings," Sima Qian contends that "rites came into being due to human feelings" (1982: 1157). Indeed, human beings are the product of nature and society and they have feelings. Ban Gu argues, "People contain the *qi* (气, literally air or energy) of *yin* (阴, literally negative) and *yang* (阳, literally positive) and have feelings, which are bestowed by nature and cannot be easily

restrained. Even the sages, who manage to restrain themselves, have no way to get over such feelings completely. Therefore, rites are established to show reverence for the deities, preach ethics, and cultivate righteous behavior" (1962: 1027). Human feelings must be expressed moderately; thus, rites and music are needed to regulate the transmission of such feelings. Wang Guowei provides the most representative theory of "sacrifices." He believes that the traditional form of *li* (礼, literally, rite, ritual, or propriety) is the general term that covers all "matters related to worship of the deities" (2001: 144); that is, religious rites formed by a series of activities offering sacrifices to deities, earthly spirits, and ghosts. This is also recorded in the *Book of Rites*:

> The sacrificial rites originate from the devotion of food to the deities. In the ancients' view, as long as they serve the deities with roasted millet and pork, dig for a pit as a wine vessel, offer wine with their hands, and play the pottery drum, their wishes and reverence will be conveyed to the deities; after one is dead, his relatives took his clothes, climbed onto the roof, and cried out toward the four sides so as to summon his soul. After the soul is summoned, they would put raw rice into the mouth of the dead, and offered a sacrifice of cooked food wrapped in grass leaves at the time of the funeral. The ancients thought when the dead was buried in the ground, his body would reach deep into the ground yet his soul would rise to heaven. So all the dead are facing the north, which represents *yin*, while the live beings are facing the south, which represents *yang* (Chen, 2014: 514).

This quotation provides basic information on the formation of rites such as the ritualization of dietary activities and formation of funeral rites. To worship deities and ghosts, primitive people developed various gifts for sacrifices and ceremonies, which eventually became a system of sacrificial rituals after the formation and establishment of conventions on ritual procedures. Regarding the theory of "ritual ceremonies," for example, Yang Kuan believes that in their social activities, primitive people "often expressed their feelings and wishes by means of various rituals composed of semiotic movements as well as semiotic objects" (1965: 234). These rituals evolved into rites after their survival as well-established social habits in the context of long-term social activities. Clearly, these rites were conventional. The theory of "communication" advocated by Yang Xiangkui suggests that "rites" originated from the primitive communication of human society. In essence, the tradition that "courtesy calls for reciprocity" in primitive society refers to a type of commodity transaction characterized by its "ritual" nature that lasted until the beginning of feudal society. The commercial nature of "ceremonies" remained until the transformation conducted by the Duke of Zhou and Confucius (Yang, 1986: 36). However, the theory of "communication" also refers to a system of rituals created by human society in the process of the exchange of materials as part of the semiosis of human beings, which has lost its original ritual meaning over time and carries a meaning other than the original. Therefore, rites are "a means by which social groups regularly consolidate themselves and in which moral integrity and a sense of collectivity and society are built through collective, emotional, environmental, and other factors" (Luo, 2009a, 2009b: 37). The ceremony itself is already a formal act based on customs, which has the functions of identification and standardization.

In summary, Chinese ritual culture is a complete set of ritual systems formed after a long period of ritualistic and systematic processes of folk experiences and customs, emotional communication, sacrificial activities, and social activities. It helps regulate the signifying activities of human society. Many basic ritual ceremonies were initially created during the Xia and Shang dynasties, which laid the foundation for the creation of the Duke of Zhou's ritual system and Confucian innovation.

3.1.2 The Creation of Rites and Music by the Duke of Zhou

Zhang Xuecheng, a scholar of the Qing Dynasty, believes that "the ancient sages learned from the people" (1985: 121). According to him, the gentleman learned from the virtuous, the virtuous from the sages, and the sages from the people. Here, the "people" refer to the common people who gradually developed a set of ritual customs in their social exchanges. These customs were ritualized and routinized by the sages through transformation and innovation or were imbued with additional meaning. When performed, these standardized rites and routines conveyed a fixed meaning and transformed what the "'people did not know' previously into 'what they know'" (1985: 121). Thus, the first ritual system was formally established. As such, according to Mr. Zhang, the Duke of Zhou was a sage. In my opinion, Zhang's view makes sense.

Historical documents abound with records related to the creation of rites and music by the Duke of Zhou. For instance, the *Book of Rites* records the following:

> King Zhou of Shang was vicious beyond measure and provided dinner for the feudal princes with the dried flesh of Lord Gui, which infuriated the Duke of Zhou, who then assisted King Wu of Zhou in attacking King Zhou. King Wu of Zhou, however, died soon after the regime was established. As King Cheng of Zhou was too young, the Duke of Zhou became the regent and came to his nephew's rescue. In the sixth year of his regency, the Duke of Zhou convened the feudal princes in the Ming Hall to create rites and music and issue the weights and measures for the citizens to observe (Chen, 2014: 549).

There is a similar record in *Records of the Grand Historian*, "Having overturned the reign of the Shang Period and conquered the Huaiyi Tribe, the Duke of Zhou establishes a capital in Feng, creates the bureaucratic system of Zhou, rites, and music, and changes the weights and measures, thus achieving harmony among the people and having been praised" (Sima, 1982: 133). Lü Simian, a learned historian, carefully studied these records, concluding that these statements are fundamentally reliable (2016: 133–134).

There are also other questions to consider. Why did the ruling group of the Western Zhou, headed by the Duke of Zhou, create rites and music? How was the system of rites and music politicized? What was its significance? According to the aforementioned sources, after the ruling group of the Western Zhou overthrew the Shang Dynasty, King Wu died before the regime of the Western Zhou was firmly established. Therefore, the Western Zhou Period was troubled by both internal strife and foreign aggression. Externally, some remnants of the ruling class of the Shang

Dynasty, such as Wugeng and other aristocrats of the Shang Period in the Huaihe River Basin to the east, were not reconciled to their loss of power. Internally, after the death of King Wu, with King Cheng being too young to earn the qualifications and prestige needed to be king, the Duke of Zhou became the regent to avoid domestic turmoil. However, some politicians such as Guanshu and Caishu, two of King Wu's brothers, were jealous of the Duke of Zhou for his position and coveted the throne in private. To stabilize the regime, the Duke of Zhou led an eastern expedition, crushed the rebellion, and carried out the re-enfeoffment. According to Fu Chen in *Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*, "Lands in different regions were enfeoffed to the relatives of the royal family and to some loyal officials who performed meritorious services to ensure the safety of the Zhou Period" (Li, 1999a: 418). This measure was aimed at consolidating power in terms of national political structure and other areas.

In terms of political and cultural ideology, the rulers of the early Western Zhou Period led by the Duke of Zhou also carried out the corresponding reforms. Of these, the most important and far-reaching was the creation of the cultural system of rites and music. This system effectively consolidated the stability of the regime of the Western Zhou Period. As mentioned, Zhang Xuecheng argues that "the ancient sages learned from the people" (1985: 121). The rites and music created by the Duke of Zhou were based on the ritual culture of the Xia and Shang dynasties. This is also illustrated in Confucius' comment in *The Analects of Confucius*:

> The Shang Period inherited the ritual system of the Xia Dynasty, additions or deletions of which can be known. The Zhou Period inherited that of the Shang Dynasty, additions or deletions of which can be known. Therefore, the rituals of those that may succeed Zhou, even if they are a hundred generations apart from our time, can be predicted to a certain extent (Chen, 2014: 20).

According to Confucius, the Shang Period followed the ritual system of the Xia Dynasty, and the Zhou Period that of the Shang Dynasty, but not without necessary additions or deletions to better adapt to the interests of the new ruling class.

The culture of rites and music created by the Duke of Zhou integrated various human signification activities in a certain standard order, instead of merely serving to regulate and standardize social sacrificial ceremonies and other ritual ceremonies. In other words, rites played the role of norms regulating different behaviors and interpersonal relations in a given society. The historian Zhao Guangxian summarizes the following five major purposes of the rites of Zhou, "To discriminate the superior from the inferior, to pay respect for seniority, to make distinction of different positions in the court, to determine differences between men and women, and to make sure that both the rich and poor have their respective names and are treated accordingly" (1980: 99). This summary shows that the primary function of the rites and music created by the Duke of Zhou was to clarify the differences between the old and young, and the superior and inferior through ritual ceremonies. From a gender politics perspective, the hierarchical order required that women obey men, a rule that could not be challenged. Violations of the rule were considered acts of arrogation, and those who committed them were severely punished. For the ruling class, the aristocrats in

power had corresponding positions in the court, which were hereditary according to the patriarchal clan system in effect at the time. Ultimately, the discrimination of rich and poor and superior and inferior was considered legitimate, affirming the political legitimacy of all cultural signs of rites and music as the metalanguage of everyday and social life.

The system of rites and music created by the Duke of Zhou was extremely inclusive, with specific rules and orders established for all matters big and small, from territorial zoning, official duties, township autonomy, the land system, military system, urban roads, and palace rules to clothing, diet, medicine, and various living customs. One of the main themes was hierarchical difference. Differences between the various rules and regulations of the rites marked the differences in the hierarchical order of status and class. Therefore, this culture of rites and music can be considered a discriminatory system of signs, the "langue" (or language) as understood by Ferdinand de Saussure (1959: 13–14). Viewed this way, different activities can be considered "parole" (or speaking), which in practice must conform to the mandatory language specification. This culture can also be interpreted as an extremely strict indicative system of signs, the interpretant being the hierarchical difference between people. This mandatory semiotic system helped promote the hierarchy by means of signs so that it could be understood, accepted, and observed. In this way, the Duke of Zhou politicized the cultural system of rites and music. Xie Qian calls these changes the politicization of ancient religious rites and music (1996). The culture of ancient religious rites and music was extended to personal affairs, so much so that these ancient rites were more than sacrificial rites at the time. Rather, they were infused with political content and transformed into the political ritual system of the time. This political ritual system served as a basis for maintaining the patriarchal rule of the Western Zhou Period. "Its basic spirit is to differentiate the superior from the inferior, that is, to unify society under the premise of differentiating the hierarchy to bring prolonged political stability to the dynasty built on the basis of patriarchal politics" (Xie, 1996: 92). The culture of rites and music served to maintain the stability of society, secure the permanent superiority of those in power, and justify the legitimacy of the hereditary nature of power by indoctrinating the social concept. Xie's analysis is to the point. Here, rites and music constituted a semiotic system of power. This system was designed to regulate society and served as a means of social governance for the ruling class.

According to historical records, the regime gradually stabilized seven years after the Regency of the Duke of Zhou. Subsequently, the Duke of Zhou handed over the reign to King Cheng of Zhou, helping to form a patriarchal system dominated by the system of lineal primogeniture; that is, "to crown the legitimate firstborn rather than the virtuous, and to favor the legitimate over the illegitimate firstborn" (Li, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c: 13). Qian Mu further argues, "So the system of crowning the legitimate firstborn in the Zhou Period is hereby determined" (1996: 45). This not only solved the issue of power inheritance, but also distinguished the degree of intimacy through blood relations. The signifying form of the patriarchal system was completed by numerous ritual conventions such as mourning apparel. Evidently, the

regulation of society through the semiotic system of rites and music was effective and helped to maintain a stable and orderly society.

The three pillars of society of the Western Zhou Period, namely the system of enfeoffment, hierarchy, and patriarchal clan system were established at this time. They represented the ideal social model and political system respected by Confucius. The hierarchical system was established through the semiotic system of rites and music. Hierarchy was the basis for maintaining the ruling order. In addition, the system of enfeoffment and patriarchal clan system were respectively the mode of national construction and law of the order of succession of power, which laid the foundation for the creation of the state for thousands of years.

3.1.3 Denying One's Self and Returning to Propriety: The Development of Confucian Rites and Music

As discussed above, after the Western Zhou overthrew the Shang Period and inaugurated its own dynasty, the Duke of Zhou carried out a systematic revision of traditional rites and music, which helped establish a complete semiotic system and contributed significantly to China's social development. Yang Xiangkui suggests that "had it not been for the Duke of Zhou, a unified state would not have been established after King Wu conquered the Shang Dynasty, and the Confucian School would not have emerged. Had it not been for the Confucian School, the traditional civilization of China would have been different" (1992: 136). Based on the culture of the previous dynasty, the Duke of Zhou created rites and music according to the needs of the time to consolidate the power of the Western Zhou Period. In addition, thanks to the efforts of many scholars and notably Confucius, the cultural system of rites and music gave birth to traditional Confucian culture. The transformation of rites and music was adapted to the formation of a unified dynasty and establishment of a feudal landlord society in the Western Zhou Period. Moreover, Confucius' re-transformation of rites and music spiritually and also materially facilitated the establishment of this feudal landlord society and formation of a unified empire by the First Emperor of Qin (Yang, 1992: 229). Thus, what was the background of the transformation of rites and music by Confucius, the "uncrowned king"? How did his theory lay the foundation for the establishment of a great unified empire? What was the significance thereof?

Based on the development of the feudal economy, increased strength of the feudal princes, and fatuousness of the king during the Western Zhou Period, the cultural system of rites and music created by the Duke of Zhou was destroyed during the late period of the Western Zhou Period. As a result, the rights to make rites and music and to issue punitive expedition orders, formally reserved exclusively for the kings of Zhou, or sons of Heaven, were afforded to feudal princes (Chen, 2014: 51), and the cultural system of traditional rites and music could no longer effectively restrain them. With the disintegration of the system of rites of the Zhou Period, there was no escape for its politicized music system. For example, strict distinctions were made

between the types of music played for accompanying poems on different occasions and among different classes in the Pre-Imperial Period: odes (*song* 颂) were for the king, psalms major (*daya* 大雅) for meetings between princes, and psalms minor (*Xiaoya* 小雅) for banquets organized by feudal princes for the literati and officials. In addition, according to the musical system of the time, different classes had to use different music. As the human voice was emphasized in the court, songs prevailed; other types of music inferior to songs could be used by the literati, officials, and feudal princes. However, as the Duke of Zhou helped King Cheng during his reign, he was allowed to use the music for kings. When the kings of Zhou were able to dissuade feudal princes and senior officials, they enjoyed a distinct place in the hierarchy of rites and music. In other words, the hierarchical culture of rites and music was designed to maintain the authority of the kings of Zhou. If someone did not respect this hierarchy in rites and music and was rude to the kings of Zhou, he would be punished without exception.

Furthermore, scholars from the lower classes were playing an increasingly important role in academics, and various schools of thought emerged. These schools prescribed their own remedy for the disintegration of rites and music. The differences in their class of origin, positions, and academic goals meant that the thoughts and doctrines these schools advanced differed or even conflicted with each other. However, they essentially shared the same ultimate goal, which is to restore social order. According to Lu Yulin, "The scholars of the Pre-Imperial Period carried out studies and put forward theories in troubled times not for entertainment nor for the pursuit of knowledge. Rather, they aimed to solve realistic social and political problems in life. Both profound ideas and witty remarks concerned matters of human society" (2004: 1). The most important social issues at the time were the destruction of the traditional cultural semiotic system and challenge to the cultural order. For example, with the decline of the Zhou royal court, the cultural semiotic system of rites and music designed by the Duke of Zhou could no longer effectively maintain social morality and the loyalty of the people. Discrimination between people of different social classes and status through the cultural system of rites was less effective. Consequently, various types of ritual arrogations emerged, and while a new social stratum and new meanings appeared from time to time, the original cultural signs failed to adapt to these new meanings. This explains why Pre-Imperial scholars turned their attention to signs and meanings.

During the period of general social change such as the Confucian period in China or decline of Greece in the West, people became more interested in the study of signs. The signs of the time were less distinct and less persuasive, while new signs adapted to the changing society had yet to emerge. People consciously paid attention to signs when the new and original meanings conflicted or were contradictory. Since the traditional semiotic system could no longer serve people well, cultural signs had to be redesigned. As there was a gap between the new and traditional meanings, aspects including language communication, cultural signs, and so on were challenged. Therefore, people were urged to think about these problems such as the problem of signs and meanings, which is part of the research field of modern semiotics, although semiotics had not yet emerged as a discipline at the time. The Confucian School,

represented by Confucius, was the first group of wise men to speculate theoretically on the chaos of the established order and to socialize and ethicize the semiotic system of rites and music established by the Duke of Zhou, rendering it an inherent moral ethical norm to be observed by individuals. In this new social environment, Confucius rebuilt the system of rites of the Zhou Period based on rites and benevolence.

Confucius believed in the rites of the Zhou Period and identified with them throughout his life, which is repeatedly reflected in *The Analects of Confucius*. On one occasion, Confucius stated, "The ritual system of the Zhou Period, an improvement over those of the Xia and Shang dynasties, is very rich in content. Therefore, I am ready to follow it" (Chen, 2014: 21). On another, Confucius lamented, "I am indeed getting old. I have not in a long time met in my dream the Duke of Zhou" (Chen, 2014: 28). Facing the disintegration of rites and music, Confucius traveled from state to state, giving lectures and presenting his ideas on rites. However, the social order was disrupted at that time. Feudal princes and senior officials developed their own power, competing for hegemony. They dreamed of overthrowing the current social order and establishing their own regime. These ambitious plans were contrary to what Confucius advocated, namely to restore the social order of the time; realize the political ideal of the king, feudal princes, ministers, fathers, and sons acting according to their own division of labor; and perfect the current social and political system. This may explain why Confucius' claim to restore the rites of the Zhou Period was never favored.

The Duke of Zhou and Confucius were representative figures highly praised by later Confucians. An important difference between them was that the Duke of Zhou was the former de facto ruler of the Western Zhou Period and held supreme political power when he promoted the rites. This enabled him to adopt a "top-down design." In contrast, Confucius was born into a poor family and orphaned at an early age. To earn a living, he started as a lower official, but switched to teaching at the age of thirty. It was not until he was in his fifties that Confucius eventually got the chance to put his theory into practice. He was first appointed as *Zhongduzai,* head of a prefecture, and later promoted to the position of *Sikou,* minister of justice, by Duke Ding of the State of Lu. However, the morning sun never lasts the whole day. He was soon pushed away by Ji Huan, the power holder of the State of Lu, and forced to travel to the State of Wei. He continued to preach his idea of restoring the rites of Zhou to feudal princes while traveling across states. However, his program was never adopted, leaving him almost homeless and helpless, like an outcast in the world (Sima, 1982: 1921). Confucius had to convince influential political figures before his claim to restore the rites of Zhou could be promoted from top to bottom. This was no easy task as it involved changing social and cultural systems in the broader context. Therefore, it was not that Confucius did not want to adopt a "top-down design," but that such a design would not work for him. Thus, he managed to carve out a new path, namely to promote a bottom-up design. Zheng Yongjian proposes, "Confucius advocated the restoration of the rites of Zhou to deal with the crisis of the collapse of the social order at the time. However, while ethicizing and ideologicalizing the social order, he infused something new, the moral consciousness of human beings or 'benevolence,' which to be more exact, should be the rationale behind or the basis

for the order according to him" (1999). Unable to directly promote the rites of the Zhou Period, Confucius had to use a roundabout way, that of *ren* (仁 benevolence or perfect virtue), the self-consciousness of individual morality—a moderate type of "indoctrination." According to statistics provided by Yang Bojun, *ren* appears one hundred and nine times in *The Analects of Confucius*. With only four exceptions, it is related to moral standards (1980: 221). For example, a disciple once asked Confucius what "benevolence" referred to. Confucius replied that it referred to the five virtues, namely humidity, generosity, integrity, wisdom, and philanthropy (Chen, 2014: 53). Another of Confucius' disciples considered the essence of "benevolence" *xiao* (孝 filial piety) (Chen, 2014: 17). Filial piety is indeed such an important moral cultivation that it appeared nineteen times in *The Analects of Confucius* (Yang, 1980: 242). According to Confucius, "filial piety" primarily meant "no violation of rites" (Chen, 2014: 18). Of course, it meant more than the outward forms of rites, such as "being able to support parents," "children being able to shoulder the burden of their parents," and "serving delicious food to their parents" (Chen, 2014: 19). It meant "reverence" from the inner heart, without which nothing could be considered as filial piety (Chen, 2014: 22). These examples show that filial piety and reverence were the elements of benevolence. Therefore, to carry out the rites of the Zhou Period in a political environment characterized by the disintegration of rites and music, the self-consciousness of individual morality was necessary. In other words, people could not do without benevolence if they wanted to return to the rites of the Zhou Period.

> Yan Yuan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, "To subdue one's self and return to propriety is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?" Yan Yuan said, "I beg to ask the steps of that process." The Master replied, "Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety." (Chen, 2014: 39)

The root cause of the disintegration of rites and music was the expansion of the desire of human nature. Therefore, Confucius, who focused on the underclass, had no choice but to resort to moral self-discipline and ethicize the culture of rites and music to improve their moral sentiments and regulate their semiotic meanings. Moral concepts affecting people's semiotic behaviors were also expressed by signs such as "benevolence" and "rites." The "benevolence" Confucius advocated was essentially the recognition of the hierarchical semiotic system of the culture of rites and music established by the Duke of Zhou and the ethicized form of this system. If the rites were considered the sign, the hierarchy in real society should be the object and benevolence the interpretant. Therefore, as education and rites were means by which Confucius preached his doctrines; practiced his political ideas regarding rites, music, benevolence, and harmony; and the only feasible way for him to achieve salvation, it is easy to understand why he was committed to education and attached great importance to his own behaviors and manners.

In other words, there are many similarities between the origin and development of the Confucian semiotic system of the culture of rites and music and the creation of the linguistic semiotic system. The ancients gradually established ceremonies

out of the etiquette and customs of their social activities, to which new meanings were added through transformation and innovation. Thus, a fixed semiotic system emerged. In the new social context, Confucius further innovated the cultural signs of rites and music, ethicized them, standardized behaviors with the indoctrination of rites and music, and cultivated them with inner moral self-discipline rather than external obedience. Moral self-discipline and its perfection by individuals benefited the harmony and unity of the state. Thus, his theory gave rise to a whole set of norms characterized by self-cultivation, family harmony, sound state governance, and world peace, advancing his program from individuals to communities and from the underclass to the upper class. His ultimate goal was no different from that of the Duke of Zhou, that is, to rebuild the social order and achieve world peace. After the reform, on one hand, Confucian ethics recognized the rationality of the hierarchical social order marked by hierarchical signs, which had become the driving force for the development of the system of prefectures under the autocratic monarchy. On the other, the ethicized rites and music emphasized individuals' moral self-discipline and restraint on their desires to achieve sound state governance and world peace by cultivating their moral integrity. In general, this fostered social development and stability, with some conceptual signs of Confucian theory, such as loyalty and filial piety, went to the extremes, eventually hindering society's further development.

Humanity should not only serve to recreate events of the past and highlight the laws behind them, but should also be concerned with reality. From the perspective of contemporary Chinese social reality, the moral sense of society in the transition period is declining under the effect of the new culture, as is the importance of rites and conscience, and various types of malignant social events frequently occur. To solve these problems, we must focus on the current situation of cultural ethics, reflect on the situation of ethics in China, and examine and interpret traditional Chinese cultural heritage, in particular the positive significance of ethicized semiotic thoughts such as benevolence, righteousness, rites, wisdom, and integrity advanced by the Confucians represented by Confucius. In addition, we must give full play to the "braking effect" (Zhao, 2016a, 2016b: 390) of traditional Confucian ethics, guide all types of semiotic activities of contemporary human society with the beneficial elements of traditional Chinese ethical ideas, rebuild the basic values and moral norms of cultural semiosis, and promote the harmonious development of human society. These areas are worth exploring in the study of traditional ethical semiotic thought.

3.2 Restoration of Rites and Rectification of Names: Confucian Thought on Ritual Signs

With the prevalence of iron farming implements and development of productive forces, the social structure has changed rapidly since the late Western Zhou Period. As Sima Qian recorded:

> *Guanju* was composed as the reign of the Zhou Period began to decline. Due to the fatuity of King You of Zhou and King Li of Zhou, rites and music began to disintegrate. Thus, the feudal princes acted recklessly and the state was governed by the strongest among them, which made Confucius lament that the moral standards of the former kings had been abandoned. Such being the case, Confucius was determined to collate and edit the *Book of Songs* and *Book of Documents* to restore rites and music (1982: 3115).

The system of rites and music created by the rulers of the early Western Zhou Period led by the Duke of Zhou collapsed, resulting in the emergence of various schools of philosophers. These scholars wrote books advancing theories from their own strata and classes in the hope of restoring order in an increasingly disintegrated society. The Yin-yang School, Confucian School, Mohist School, School of Names, the Legalists, and the Taoists were all committed to achieving peace and prosperity in the world but followed different doctrines, whether explicit or implicit (Sima, 1982: 3288–3289). Confucius employed the restoration of rites and rectification of names to achieve peace and prosperity in the state. Therefore, how did Confucius speculate about social disorder and come up with his solution? How did the underlying communication mechanism work? Because of the interdisciplinary methodological characteristics of semiotics, a semiotic perspective might be helpful in exploring the underlying law of the construction of the social order. This is achieved by analyzing the Confucian theory of the rectification of names.

3.2.1 The Articulation of Order: Confucius' Semiotic Manipulation for the Restoration of Rites

Wang Guowei analyzes the root cultural reasons for the rites of the Western Zhou Period, noting:

> Rules of systems and rites unite the king, feudal princes, ministers, senior officials, and scholars by placing them under an obligation and having them establish moral standards, and the peace of a state can be achieved and the disaster caused by plunder be eliminated as desired by the people. Moreover, a state in ancient times serves not merely as a political institution, but also as the embodiment of moral standards. If the king, feudal princes, senior officials, and scholars can observe the systems and rites, are friendly to their loved ones, pay due respect to the respectable, follow the example of the sages, keep a decent distance from the opposite sex, and have society boast of simple and innocent folkways, then it can be called times of peace and prosperity; otherwise, times of turbulence. Therefore, the king, feudal princes, senior officials, and scholars shall play exemplary roles for the people, and systems and rites serve as carriers of moral standards. This is where the essence of the reign of the Zhou Period lies (2001: 301).

In other words, Wang Guowei suggests that the ritual system of the Zhou Period was essentially a political system through which a hierarchical order was established for the king, feudal princes, senior officials, and scholars. In this system, different titles corresponded to different positions, statuses, and roles, which clarified the social division of labor, status, and power. Only in this way could the culture of rites and music play its political and ethical role and regulate the hierarchical order of

social life. With this in mind, we can better understand why Confucius criticized many phenomena that arrogated rites.

As recorded in *The Analects of Confucius*, Confucius spoke about the head of the Ji family who had eight rows of pantomimes in his area, asking, "If he can bear to do this, what may he not bear to do?" According to Ma Rong's annotation cited in Cheng Shude's *The Interpretation of the Analects of Confucius*:

> The king was entitled to eight rows of pantomimes; the feudal princes, six; the senior officials, four; and scholars, two. With eight members in each row, the number of performers in the eight rows of pantomimes totaled sixty-four. The Duke of Zhou had Lu as his fiefdom and was allowed to enjoy eight rows of pantomimes as the king did, while Ji Huan was not entitled to such a privilege. This is why he was criticized by Confucius (Cheng, 2014: 179).

Cheng's textual research reveals that Ji Huan was actually referring to Ji Ping, a minister of the State of Lu. Lu was the fiefdom of the Duke of Zhou. As he well deserved the Zhou sovereign, the Duke of Zhou was granted by the king of Zhou the privilege of eight rows of pantomimes, a fact supported by historical literature. For instance, *The Book of Rites* records that as the Duke of Zhou deserved well the Zhou Period in the past, he was allowed after his death to enjoy the grand ceremony by King Cheng and King Kang of the Zhou Period, who were obliged to him. In other words, he was entitled not only to the *Jiao* 郊 and *She* 社 sacrifices, in which the sacrificial ceremony was held outside, but also to the *Dachang* 大尝 and *Di* 禘 sacrifices, in which the sacrificial ceremony was held inside. In the *Dachang* and *Di* sacrifices, the *Qingmiao* 清庙 song was sung, *Xiang* 象 music was played on wind instruments, the *Dawu* 大武 dance was performed with red shields and jade axes, and the *Daxia* 大夏 dance was performed in the form of eight rows. All these rituals were exclusively for kings but were specially granted to the Lu fiefdom to honor the Duke of Zhou (Chen, 2014: 616). *Qingmiao* was a song in praise of King Wen of Zhou and *Daxia* was performed in praise of Yu the Great. Both were reserved for grand ceremonies when sacrifices were made for the deceased kings, but this privilege was specially granted to the Lu fiefdom. In short, the Lu fiefdom had eight rows of pantomimes when holding sacrifices for King Wen and the Duke of Zhou. However, Mr. Ji, who was only a minister, was not supposed to do so. Therefore, by performing these pantomimes in his area, Mr. Ji was considered as disrespecting the king. The *Book of Rites* criticizes these phenomena as follows:

> The feudal princes dared not have rites allowed only to be enjoyed by the king, and the senior officials dared not have rites allowed only to be enjoyed by the feudal princes. The three sons of Duke Huan of the Lu state were the initiators of such irreverence as setting the temple of the public in their own areas (Chen, 2014: 526).

These practices were considered a serious violation of established rites and therefore recorded as a "typical case" and criticized.

This example shows that these "rites" were based on "articulation" (hierarchy). Eight rows of pantomimes were privileges of the king, six rows of feudal princes, four rows of senior officials, and two rows of scholars. That is, the "articulation" of "pantomimes" underlined differences in status. The renowned linguist Saussure proposes the concept of "articulation," noting in *Course in General Linguistics* that in

Table 3.1 Pantomimes and status hierarchy

Rows of Pantomimes	Status Hierarchy
Eight	The king
Six	Feudal princes
Four	Senior officials
Two	Scholars

speech activities, articulation designates either the subdivision of a spoken chain into syllables or subdivision of the chain of meanings into significant units. Articulation divides not only the chain of signifiers, but also the chain of meaning. The former is divided into syllables and the latter into smaller units of meaning (Saussure, 1959: 10). Saussure views this ability of human beings as the mechanism for differentiating concepts by signs, in which words and phrases are articulated into syllables and the meaning is articulated into words. This is what double articulation in linguistics means. Double articulation exists in all symbolic systems. Articulation reflects the social and cultural significance embodied by the signs and is very important for interpersonal relationships in a given culture. Zhao Yiheng suggests, "Politics, in essence, is the manipulation of interpersonal relations. Therefore, it is necessary to guide people so that they will not be at a loss for what is proper" (Hu & Zhao, 2012: 51). The political system of the Zhou Period was characterized by strict stratification between the king, feudal princes, ministers, senior officials, and scholars, underlining their respective ranks. These differences were then also emphasized in the ritual system. As Table 3.1 shows, each class could only have what was granted by the system.

If the pantomime was the expression, its corresponding status hierarchy was the content. If the expression and its content were coherent, the social order worked well. Otherwise, it did not. Therefore, it was against the corresponding rules on rites that the head of the Ji family had "eight rows of pantomimes in his area." This behavior constituted a violation of prestige rites. Unsurprisingly, Confucius condemned him. Confucius also severely criticized another violation, "The three ministers arranged for *Yong* 雍 to be sung when withdrawing their offerings after finishing the sacrificial ceremony for their ancestors, on which Confucius commented, 'how can such lines—the feudal princes are allowed to have the deacon and the king, the officiant—be used in the ancestral temple of these three ministers?'" (Chen, 2014: 21). The three ministers referred to here are Mengsun, Shusun, and Jisun of the Lu State. According to Zhu Xi, *Yong* was the title of sacrificial songs of the Zhou Period, which could not be sung on any occasion other than the withdrawal of the offerings after the sacrificial ceremony for the king or it would be considered an act of irreverence (1983a: 61). None of the three ministers were qualified to be the deacon, let alone the officiant. Therefore, Confucius severely condemned them when they asked the musician to sing *Yong* when withdrawing their offerings after the sacrificial ceremony for their ancestors. There's another line quoted in the annotation of Jia Gongyan illustrates their violation, "The eight rows of pantomimes are specially granted to the Duke of Zhou, and may not be used in any temple other than the Memorial

Temple to King Wen of the Zhou Period and that of the Duke of Zhou; otherwise, it would be deemed an act of irreverence" (Cheng, 2014: 181). Clearly, the three ministers of Lu violated the rites for the king. In other words, they did not follow the cultural order and status hierarchy stipulated by established rites and music. As mentioned, if the pantomime was the expression, the corresponding status hierarchy was its content. Thus, the articulation of rites and music corresponded to that of the social order. The king, feudal princes, senior officials, and scholars were entitled to rites and music corresponding to their identity. Therefore, rites and music could be considered the "signifier" and the corresponding status hierarchy the "signified." Confucius traveled the different states and advocated the restoration of the rites of Zhou, which semiotically suggests that he sought to distinguish the signified by distinguishing the signifier. The arguments according to which the articulation of the signifier corresponds to that of the signified and that this "articulation can reflect the social and cultural meaning embodied by the sign" (Hu & Zhao, 2012) are more explicitly expressed in *The Zuo's Commentary*. Below is an excerpt:

> The King of Wei dispatched Sun Liangfu, Shi Ji, Ning Xiang, Xiang Qin, and so on to attack the state of Qi. They met with the army of Qi half way... The army of Qi raised the attack and was stationed in the territory of Wei. At that time, Sun Huanzi (Sun Liangfu) was saved by Zhongshu Yuxi from Xin Zhu.
>
> Soon, the King of Wei granted cities to Zhongshu Yuxi, but the offer was declined. Instead, Zhongshu requested the privileges of having musical instruments hung by three sides (quxuan 曲县) and his horse decorated with numerous tassels (fanying 繁缨) when being presented. Rites to which only the feudal princes are entitled. The King of Wei consented though.
>
> Upon hearing the news, Confucius commented, "Why! It would have been more proper to grant him more cities. The king of a state should always keep in mind that anything can be granted to others but utensils and titles. By granting titles, the authority is established; by establishing the authority, the utensil is maintained; the utensil is designed to embody the ritual system; the ritual system, to promote morality and justice; the morality and justice, to produce benefits; and benefits, to govern the people by means of which the regime of a state can sustain. Therefore, the regime may well be regarded as having been granted to one as soon as he receives the titles and utensils. Then, the regime of a state could no longer be sustained" (Li, 1999a: 690).

To facilitate further analysis, the ritual meanings of *quxuan* 曲县 and *fanying* 繁缨 are clarified first. As explained in the *Rites of Zhou*,

> For the king, musical instruments are allowed to be hung on four sides inside the room (*gongxuan* 宫县); the feudal princes, three sides (*xuanxuan* 轩县); ministers and senior officials, two sides (*panxuan* 判县); and scholars, one side (*texuan* 特县), i.e., clear articulation also exists in the specifications of the instruments that are allowed to be used by the king, feudal princes, senior officials, and scholars, respectively (Kong, 2013: 1823).

Similar expressions are also found in the *Commentary on the Rites of Zhou* (Li, 1999b: 605). Thus, it is evident that the articulation of how musical instruments are to be hung should correspond to that of status.

"*Fanying*," according to *Correct Meanings of the Zuo's Commentary*, "refers to belt ornaments used for the chariot of the feudal princes" (Li, 1999a: 691). Similar ideas are found in the *Rites of Zhou*: Jinche is in charge of official decrees relating

to official chariots, managing the reception and distribution of such chariots, distinguishing their respective purposes and corresponding banners, and articulation and status (Kong, 2013: 2141). This clarified that the banner of a chariot is used to distinguish grades and order, that is, the articulation of chariots and tassels corresponds to status. According to this principle of articulation, "*fanying*" or a "complex tassel" marked the status of feudal princes. Being only a senior official, Zhongshu Yuxi should not have been granted the privileges of having his room hung with musical instruments on three sides and being presented in a chariot decorated with complex tassels. This explains why Confucius could not help sighing upon hearing that the King of Wei had granted Zhongshu Yuxi these privileges. Confucius believed it would have been more appropriate to grant him more cities and that the king of a state should always keep in mind that everything except utensils and titles could be granted to others. After all, "By granting titles, authority is established; by establishing the authority, the corresponding utensil is maintained; the utensil is designed to embody the ritual system; the ritual system, to promote morality and justice; the morality and justice, to produce benefits; and benefits, to govern the people by means of which the regime of a state is expected to be sustained" (Li, 1999a: 690). Therefore, the regime would be considered granted to a person as soon as the titles and utensils were granted. With its root eradicated, how could the regime of a state survive?

In fact, it was well known that only when the corresponding political authority of the rites was perfect could the articulation of the rites be consistent with the status hierarchy. Otherwise, the rites would begin to decline. The power to regulate rites and issue expedition orders would be in the hands of feudal princes or of "ministers and senior officials." Not only kings but also feudal princes would lose their hold on real power. Rites, chariots, and titles would be reduced to "empty signifiers" instead of continuing to effectively play the role of "grammar rules." In terms of the signification mechanism, the "rites" pursued by Confucius sought to re-establish the norm of the "signified"—i.e., the reconstruction of the status hierarchy—by standardizing the "signifier" system and principle of double articulation. Confucius spoke highly of the rites of Zhou because he believed that society would gain control of its citizens by instilling in them the specific denotation, evaluation, and regulation of its own culture. The rite-based cultural system was characterized by consistency between identity (or/and status) and rites (or/and titles), with a clear relationship between the subject and its predicate where different positions correspond to their respective functions. Essentially, the disintegration of rites and music was a violation of the established norm and contributed to the ineffectiveness of double articulation. Confucius was appalled by this inconsistency and frequently criticized the behavior of those who failed to comply with the ritual system in *The Analects of Confucius*; for example:

Jisun paid a visit to Mount Tai for sacrifices (Chen, 2014: 20).

> The prince set up a screen wall at the gate, so did Guan Zhong. When the prince met with princes from other states, he had a stand on which to place their inverted cups, so did Guan Zhong. If such acts of Guan Zhong were not counted as acts of irreverence, then what else was? (Chen, 2014: 21)

In the first case, Jisun, a minister, did not conform to the ritual system when he offered sacrifices on Mount Tai, a ceremony to be practiced by kings only. Similarly, Guan Zhong arrogated the rites of feudal princes by setting up the screen wall and earthen table. Neither Jisun nor Guan Zhong complied with the norm of the system of signs with double articulation, rendering the signs inconsistent with their corresponding positions in the hierarchy. This explains Confucius' dissatisfaction and indignation.

3.2.2 Form and Meaning of Signs: Analysis of the Relationship Between the Forms of Rites and Their Meanings

From a semiotics perspective, "Meanings must be expressed by signs, for signs serve to express them. In turn, there is no meaning that can be expressed without signs and no signs that do not convey a certain meaning" (Zhao, 2016a, 2016b: 45). Human beings live in a world of meaning constructed by signs and need to express themselves through these signs. Ritual culture is part of the inherent characteristics of the Chinese nation. Ancient people expressed the specific significance of their culture through rites. This explains why it is believed that the cultural form of rites is essentially a sign form developed over a long period, for example:

> Confucius said, "The rites of the Xia Period and Shang Period can be proven, yet that of their descendants, the state of Qi and state of Song, respectively, are hard to verify because of the insufficient literature and them not being widely speculated. Otherwise, both can be proven." (Chen, 2014: 20–21)

> Zi Zhang asked Confucius, "Can we know beforehand the ritual system of the subsequent dynasties from now?" Confucius replied, "The Shang Period inherited the ritual system of the Xia Dynasty, additions or deletions of which can be easily known. The Zhou Period inherited that of the Shang Dynasty, additions or deletions of which can be easily known. Thus, the ritual system of later generations, although a hundred years from now, can be inferred." (Chen, 2014: 20)

The culture of rites evolved with continuous additions or deletions to become a political and cultural system after its ritualization and systematization by a group of rulers of the early Western Zhou Period, such as the Duke of Zhou. In *The Book of Rites*, the following is recorded:

> After the death of King Wu of Zhou, as King Cheng of Zhou was young and weak, the Duke of Zhou committed himself to governing the state on behalf of King Cheng. In the sixth year of his regency, he convened the feudal princes to the Hall of Distinction, instituted ceremonies, made his instruments of music, and gave out his standard weights and measures. As a result, there was a grand submission throughout the kingdom. (Chen, 2014: 549).

Not surprisingly, the Duke of Zhou developed rites and music based on what had been transmitted from the Xia and Shang dynasties through deletions or additions. However, the ritual system of the Western Zhou Period, a political and cultural

system, could not have been completed in just one year as recorded in the *Book of Rites*. Instead, even with the continuous efforts of several generations of kings of the early Western Zhou Period, it took more than a hundred years for its system of rites and music to be complete. Once established, this system had the role of regulating and adjusting the social order with the support of political power. Through this system, the corresponding standard order was established for the semiosis of different people, adjusting their interpersonal relationships and the social order. In particular, the articulation of the system of rites and music played a role in regulating social order and stratifying members of society. It covered all people above scholars. In other words, a particular order system was established for the entire ruling class. Therefore, the cultural system of rites and music of the Zhou Period was actually a hierarchical system of signs and special "language" that regulated all types of "speech" behavior at any time. If the "speech" behavior of an individual did not conform to "language" norms, he would be subject to the corresponding sanctions. When the kings of Zhou had absolute leadership over feudal princes, this set of language norms called for strict obedience. However, after the transfer of the capital of the Western Zhou from Hao to Luoyi, the power of the kings of Zhou began to decline while that of the feudal princes began to rise. As a result, the language norms stipulated by traditional rites could no longer effectively restrain feudal princes and their retainers. During this period of rapid social change, the established signs were unable to fulfill their specific functions, while the new signs adapted to this changed society had not yet appeared. The current language was invalid, and new cultural signs were needed. Indeed, as the signs could no longer serve people well, an increasing number of people engaged in the study of signs. This was the case at the time of Confucius.

Certainly, for the Chinese, "semiotics" is an imported academic term. However, using signs is the only way to express meaning. It makes no difference whether people are in China or elsewhere, or in ancient or modern times. In the *Book of Changes*, an obscure semiotic system was composed by the ancient people of China at a very early time. The ritual system of the Western Zhou Period was established using the double articulation of signs, i.e., the relationship of the signified was determined by the division of signifiers. Confucius advocated the restoration of the rites of Zhou to clarify this denotation of relationships. Moreover, he lived in a time of great change when cultural signs became ineffective, when eight rows of pantomimes were used by the three ministers in their respective areas, and rites of all kinds were abandoned. All these changes saddened Confucius and led him to reconsider the relationship between the form of rites and their meaning. The "form of rites" referred to a variety of ceremonial rites and the "meaning of rites" to the interpretation of various ceremonial rites. The first was embodied by the system of ritual signs, and the second explained the first.

If the form of rites was comparable to the expression of signs ("signifiers"), the meaning of these rites would be comparable to the content of these signs (the "signified"). The transmission of the meaning of rites required the distinct form of these rites. Without this form, the meaning of rites could not be attached anywhere. This is clearly reflected in *The Analects of Confucius*, "Zigong thought that as the Duke of Lu ceased to visit the ancestral temple to offer sacrifices in person, the rite of

butchering a sheep may as well be abolished. Confucius said, 'Oh, what you cherish is nothing but the sheep; but I, the rite'" (Chen, 2014: 21). *Gu shuo xi yang* 告朔饩羊 was a rite of ancient times where "the king issued the lunar calendar of the following year to the feudal princes, hid it in the ancestral temple, and visited the ancestral temple on the first day of every month with a sheep as the offering" (Cheng, 2014: 250). In this rite, the sheep was a type of oblation. These political rites were first abandoned in the State of Lu during the reign of Duke Wen. Since then, the Duke of Lu no longer attended the ceremony marking the king of Zhou distributing the calendar of the coming year to the feudal states, although the official kept the rite of butchering a sheep as an offering. Therefore, Zigong thought the rite of butchering a sheep should also be abolished, but Confucius rejected this, believing that "if one of the rites of butchering a sheep as an offering is not abandoned, the rite of *gu shuo xi yang* can be learnt and restored by later generations; otherwise, it may perish. This is why the sheep for *gu shuo* shall be reserved." (Li, 1999a: 39) The sheep was merely an object for Zigong, but Confucius considered it a sacrificial offering and symbolic representation of the rite. According to Yoshihiko Ikegami, "When something represents something else as a substitute for it, it functions as a sign that is designed with a 'semiotic function.'" (1985: 45) The sheep in the above-mentioned case served as a sacrificial offering, thus becoming a sign of the rite. Only with this sign could the meaning of the rite be expressed. In other words, if this sacrificial offering were abandoned, the meaning of the rite of *gu shuo xi yang* would not be attached anywhere, as the meaning of a rite had to be expressed by a particular sign. Therefore, Confucius paid attention to the meaning of the related rite expressed by the sheep, rather than to the value and significance of the sheep itself, which is why he insisted on reserving the rite of butchering a sheep as a sacrificial offering.

Confucius paid attention not only to the expression, the rite as a sign, but also to its meaning, attaching greater importance to its meaning than its expression. This is clearly reflected in his claim that "rites are not equal to jade objects and silk fabrics," wherein he asked, "Can rites be fully expressed by jade objects and silk fabrics? Can bells and drums be all that is meant by music?" (Chen, 2014: 54) .

As mentioned, Confucius paid attention not only to the rites—i.e., the expression—but also to their meaning, that is, the interpretant. He pointed out that rites were not equal to jade objects, silk fabrics, or sacrificial offerings like the above-mentioned sheep. The objects involved in a rite were only the signs that served to express its meaning. As the meaning of the rite was absent, a form was needed to represent it, because "the reason a sign is necessary is that the meaning is absent, and that the meaning is absent is the premise of a semiosis" (Zhao, 2016a, 2016b: 45). Moreover, the meaning of the rite had to be reflected by the interpretation of its form. However, the form of the rite, such as jade objects and silk fabrics for sacrifices, corresponded not to its meaning, but to its representation. The essence of a rite was based on the interpretant of the sign, i.e., its meaning. According to the *Book of Rites*:

> That which is most important in ceremonies is to understand the idea intended in them. While the idea is missed, the number of things and observances in them may be correctly exhibited, as that is the business of the officers of prayer and the recorders. Here that may all be exhibited, but it is difficult to know the idea. The knowledge of that idea and the reverent

> maintenance of it was the way by which the sons of Heaven secured the good government of the kingdom (Chen, 2014: 530).

Exhibiting "the number of things" meant listing the content of a rite, which was the responsibility of the officers of prayer and the recorders, while the meaning of a rite was related to the governance of the state and its main affairs. In other words, the meaning of a rite was more valuable than its form. However, in terms of semiotic operation, neither the form nor the meaning could be neglected. Without the form of a rite, its meaning could not be represented and interpreted. Considering this semantic background, Confucius was justified in reminding people that the form of rites, like jade objects and silk fabrics, was not equal to their meaning. Wang Bi was quoted by Huang Kan as saying that "rites are designed to show reverence while jade objects and silk fabrics are but tools. Music aims to achieve harmony while bells and drums are just instruments. However, the so-called rites and music of the time attached greater importance to the tools than to reverence, emphasizing the instruments rather than harmony. This is why Confucius considered it necessary to rectify the meaning of the rites" (Cheng, 2014: 1567). The true value and significance of the rites were based not on their form, but on their meaning such as reverence and harmony. However, the people of the time paid too much attention to the form of the rites, ignoring the pursuit of their meaning. This phenomenon was attributed to the "lack of benevolence," as discussed in *The Analects of Confucius*, "Confucius said, 'If a man be without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with the rites of propriety? If a man be without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with music?'" (Chen, 2014: 20) This shows that Confucius incorporated the kernel of "benevolence" into the culture of rites. "Benevolence" referred to "denying the self and returning to propriety" (Chen, 2014: 39). In other words, the "benevolence" Confucius advocated was a moral self-discipline: the culture of rites was moralized to standardize one's communication behavior by signs. The pursuit of and adherence to the meaning of rites were internalized as a moral ethic enabling people to conform to the forms of rites and to respect their content. Thus, with form and content complementing each other, rites were likely to work better.

3.2.3 Rectification of Names: Reshaping Coding Rules by Confucius

As mentioned, in the context of the disintegration of rites and music, the philosophers of different schools of the late Western Zhou Period put forward their own theories including the theory of "no name" of Taoism, theory of "universal love" of Mohism, theory of "name and substance" of the School of Names, and theory of "form and name" of the Huang-Lao Taoism. Confucius offered the theory of the rectification of names. How did it work? What was its significance? These two questions are answered below.

Confucius lived in a time of great change when the established social order had been destroyed, but the new social form had yet to take shape. Thus, new cultural signs were needed, as the established names failed to characterize the modified content. As recorded in *The Analects of Confucius*: "A virtuous man who drinks a lot should say *Gu* (less)! How strange it is!" (Chen, 2014: 28). Liu Baonan explains it as follows

A one-liter drinking vessel is called *Jue* 爵, a character which means over or enough. A two-liter drinking vessel is called *Gu* 觚, a character with the same pronunciation as 孤 (*Gu*, meaning little, few, or lonely). When it comes to wine drinking, one should be moderate (1990: 241). Both 觚 and 孤 are pronounced as *Gu* in Chinese. Moreover, 孤 (*Gu*) and 寡 (*Gua*) are vowel rhymes and paronyms. Therefore, 觚 has acquired the same meaning as 孤 and 寡, both first person pronouns used by virtuous men. However, these days, people use 觚 even when they drink excessively. Is it not strange? (1990: 241).

觚 (*Gu*), a term for controlled drinking, was abused by those who drank a lot. Therefore, the name of the drinking vessel was inconsistent with its meaning. (Another explanation is that 觚 [*Gu*] once referred to cornered drinking vessels; however, in Confucius' time, the name also applied to round wine vessels. This means the name was now inconsistent with its original meaning, which Confucius lamented.) The system of rites and music encompassed all ethics and daily behaviors. The fact that the name of a drinking vessel was different from reality, trivial as it may seem, affected the practice of the rite, which was intolerable for Confucius who firmly believed in the rites of Zhou.

Here, the traditional ethical order had begun to disintegrate and all types of irreverent behaviors had been documented since the beginning of the Spring and Autumn Period. People no longer respected the ritual system corresponding to their class, which is why Confucius wanted to rectify the names, or specifically, the political and ethical names. Provided below is a case of Confucius rectifying the name of the expression *jia ma* 假马 (borrowing a horse):

> Confucius was sitting in attendance on Ji Sun, when Zai Tong of Ji Sun asked, "If the king intends to borrow a horse from his subjects, will they lend it to him?" Confucius said, "I hear that if the king wants something from his subjects, the proper verb used should be *qu* 取 (obtain) rather than *jia* 假 (borrow)." Ji Sun was enlightened and retold it to Zai Tong. By rectifying an expression, the hierarchy between the king and his subjects was reaffirmed (Han, 1980: 200–201).

According to Confucius, when the monarch asked for something from his subjects, the proper verb to use was *qu* 取 (obtain) not *jia* 假 (borrow), as the first verb embodied their different hierarchy, while the second did not. In his view, political names played a very important role. Unless well handled, it would cause political confusion, as the Duke Jing of the Qi State remarked when consulting political affairs, "The feudal princes, ministers, and fathers and sons fail to set a good model" (Chen, 2014: 40). Seniority was not respected, and precedence was ignored. The theory of the rectification of names focused on the correspondence between names and reality; that is, the principle of the biaxial operations of signs had to be carefully observed. Moreover, each of these operations had been standardized by "rites." As such, the rites the Confucians advocated were a system of rules through which all aspects

of social life and political ethics were regulated, the articulation of hierarchy was achieved, and the social order was standardized. Indeed, stable rites contributed to a stable social order. The articulation of rites in the ruling class covered all aspects from ethics to everyday use. To some extent, the rites were the codes of the social order at the time. Confucius' advocacy in *The Analects of Confucius* stated, "One shall restrain himself from watching, hearing, speaking, or touching anything that goes beyond the scope of rites," (Chen, 2014: 39) emphasizing the authority of the codes in the regulation of social order. Confucius advanced the theory of the rectification of names to cope with social disorder, referring to the maintenance of the rules of these codes. This is reflected in the following excerpt from *The Analects of Confucius:*

> Zilu asked Confucius, "If the Duke of Wei asks you to govern the country, what will you start with?" Confucius replied, "The rectification of names." Zilu then said, "Why? Why are you being so unrealistic? Why do you want to rectify the names?" Confucius replied, "Oh, how can you speak so rudely! A responsible gentleman is always cautious about what he does not know. If names be not correct, whatever is said cannot convey the truth of things. If whatever is said cannot convey the truth of things, goals cannot be accomplished. When goals cannot be accomplished, rites and music will not flourish. When rites and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly given. When punishments are not properly given, people do not know how to behave. Therefore, a responsible gentleman makes sure that the names he uses are appropriate, and that whatever he says can be carried out appropriately. What a responsible gentleman requires is nothing but that there is nothing incorrect in his words." (Chen, 2014: 42)

Kuai Zhe, the Duke Chu of Wei, scrambled for the throne against Kuai Kui, his father, which arrogated the monarch-subject relationship. Zilu asked Confucius, "If the Duke Chu of Wei asks you to help deal with political affairs, what measures will you take?" Confucius replied with the aforementioned theory of the rectification of names. First, Confucius clearly pointed out that names needed to be rectified. However, Zilu disagreed and thought he was being impractical. Confucius explained that if the names used by an individual are not verified, his conduct will be unjustified, resulting first in the failure of the cultural sign, second in the destruction of the social order, and finally in greater confusion. According to Confucius, the names reveal the related status hierarchy, which reveals the related division of labor. In other words, "the king, feudal princes, ministers, fathers, and sons shall all act in accordance with their names and do what is expected of them" (Chen, 2014: 40). After all, "People with different names and ranks are to be properly treated with different rites" (Ban, 1962: 1737). In other words, the rectification of names proposed by Confucius sought to restore the regulation of the social order through the system of ritual culture. With this system, it was hoped the monarch, his subjects, and fathers and sons could standardize their behaviors to make them conform to the stipulation of rites, the codes of the social order.

Although scholars have different views on the names Confucius wanted to rectify, one thing is certain: the names of the monarch, his subjects, and fathers and sons were not correct, a situation to be avoided in any efficient governing. *The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei* provides a detailed summary of the "rectification of names":

> To rule a country, we must first make clear the names of the king, his subjects, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives, and justify them. If names are justified, those of lower status

> will not go beyond the law and discipline and those of higher status will not act recklessly. The younger generation will not be ferocious and unsocial and the elders will not be sluggish and inattentive (...) The late kings were cautious in making distinctions between the honorable and the superior, between the ethics that shall be observed by the elders and by the younger generation, respectively, which is also the key to maintaining the peace of a state (Xu, 2009: 670).

In dealing with state affairs, the order prescribed by the rites of Zhou could be restored by first rectifying the names and then determining the different social positions of the people, which should motivate them to act. For this reason, Confucius' theory of the rectification of names was a political ideology. To rectify names was to bring things back to what they were described as by established norms. However, some scholars believe it actually meant regulating the changing society using the old ideology. Tu Youxiang explains that when the name is fixed, the ideology is incompatible with it. However, when the name is justified, the underlying ideology is difficult to find. "As a result, every time a new form or new type of ideology emerges, those who commit themselves to the rectification of names are often defenders of the previous ideology" (Tu, 2011a, 2011b: 161). In the time of great changes of the late Western Zhou Period, Confucius actively advocated the rectification of names, such as by rectifying the inconsistency between the form and meaning of the drinking vessel. Unsurprisingly, Zhu Xi refers to this theory as "the essence of humanitarianism and foundation of political affairs" (1983: 136). The theory of the rectification of names proposed by Confucius was the administrative program by which he tried to restore the order of rites and cope with social disturbance.

In summary, in the context of the disintegration of rites and music since the late Western Zhou Period, Confucius proposed the theories of the restoration of rites and rectification of names. The articulation of rites corresponded to the hierarchy of status, and the cultural system of rites was a sign hierarchical system. Confucius advocated the restoration of rites to clarify the relationship between rites and the status hierarchy. In addition, the theory of the rectification of names focused on the correspondence between names and reality and was based on the principle of biaxial semiotic operation, which aimed to restore the social order and reverse the deteriorating trend in a society troubled by the disintegration of rites and music.

3.3 Mencius' Thought on Textual Meaning

Mencius, honored as "the Minor Sage," inherited and developed the theories of Confucian thought. His semiotic thought was embodied in his theories of poetry interpretation "to meet the general scope [the author's will] with one's own thoughts" (Chen, 2014: 107) and "understand a person by studying his/her history" (Chen, 2014: 115). From a semiotics perspective, the first aimed to explain the proper attitude and methods to adopt to interpret poetry and the second investigated how to obtain the meaning of a poem from a pragmatic perspective, suggesting that the "context" be recreated and used to understand the meaning of a poem.

3.3.1 Semiotic Thought on "Meeting the Author's Will with One's Own Thoughts"

The *Book of Documents* records the directions of Emperor Shun when he put Xie in charge of music and teaching students poetry and music. He stated, "I appoint you to be Director of Music and to teach our sons so that the straightforward shall yet be mild; the gentle, dignified; the strong, not tyrannical; and the impetuous, not arrogant. Poetry is the expression of *zhi* (志 will, or earnest thought); singing is the prolonged utterance of that expression; the notes accompany that utterance, and they are harmonized themselves by the standard tubes" (Chen, 2014: 218). The second part *of* the quotation, generally accepted as the "opening remark" of the poetics of successive Chinese dynasties, profoundly influenced the theoretical criticism of Chinese literature (Zhu, 1996: 4). What was the connotation of "*zhi*"? Based on the three sentences above dealing with the rhythm of music, it could refer to a mental emotion. Evidence is also found in *Preface to Mao Poetry*: "Poetry is about *zhi* (志 will). Texts are ways to express one's will. The will beyond its expression by texts is expressed by sighs, that beyond sighs by songs, and that beyond songs by dance" (Ruan, 1980: 269–300). According to the logic of this text, "poetry" was a form of "will" hidden in the heart and revealed through texts. As texts alone were insufficient to fully express one's will, signs, songs, and dance were also used. Kong Yingda comments, "Poetry is about the expression of one's will. When the will is voiced, a poem comes into being. Poetry is a means by which a poet expresses his/her will" (Ruan, 1980: 270). Poetry carried people's thoughts and feelings. Before these feelings were revealed, they were known as will. Once revealed and accompanied by music and dance, a poem was created. (This also shows that in ancient China, there were no clear distinctions between poetry, music, and dance.) Therefore, "poetry" could be considered an explicit semiotic form of "will."

With the relationship between "poetry" and "will" clarified, we can discuss Mencius' "meeting the author's will with one's own thoughts." Just as "expressing one's will" was considered the opening remark of Chinese poetics, "meeting the author's will with one's own thoughts" was considered the opening remark of Chinese poetic hermeneutics (Zhou, 2003: 38), which influenced the poetic hermeneutics of later generations. Here is where the tradition started:

> Xian Qiumeng said, "On the point of Shun's not treating Yao as a minister, I have received your instructions. But it is said in the *Book of Songs*, 'Under the whole heaven, every spot is the sovereign's ground; to the borders of the land, every individual is the sovereign's minister.' Shun had become sovereign. I venture to ask how it was that Gusou was not one of his ministers?"
>
> Mencius answered, "That ode is not to be understood in that way. It speaks of being laboriously engaged in the sovereign's business so as not to be able to nourish one's parents, as if the author said, 'This is all the sovereign's business, and how is it that I alone am supposed to have ability and am made to toil in it?' Therefore, those who explain the odes may not insist on one term to do violence to a sentence, nor on a sentence to do violence to the general scope. They must try with their thoughts to meet that scope, and then we shall apprehend it. If we simply take single sentences, there is that in the ode called 'The Milky Way.' 'Of the

> black-haired people of the remnant of Zhou, there is not half a one left.' If it had been really as thus expressed, then not an individual of the people of Zhou was left." (Chen, 2014: 107)

Here, Mencius put forward his theory of "try with their thoughts to meet the general scope [the author's will]." To understand it correctly, we must first clarify the meaning of *yi wen hai ci* 以文害辞, "insist on one term to do violence to a sentence" and *yi ci hai zhi* 以辞害志, "[insist] on a sentence to do violence to the general scope [the author's will]." The Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period had the tradition of "expressing one's will with poems" on diplomatic occasions. Confucius taught his son that "one would not know how to express himself without learning poems," (Chen, 2014: 52–53) confirming the indispensable role of poems at the time. Expressing one's will with poems was accomplished through the speaker and addressee garbling as needed a chosen statement from among different poems in a specific communicative context. In *Zuo's Commentary,* Lu Pugui stated, "It is my needs that determine whether I recite poems or garble certain parts of them" (Yang, 1990: 1146). With this understanding comes a problem—the speaker and addressee took part of the meaning of a poem; thus, the meaning of a poem was taken apart. For example, some of the sentences quoted in this passage were actually a way of garbling a statement, ending with a meaning different from that of the entire poem. Mencius summarized this as insisting "on one term to do violence to a sentence" and "[insist] on a sentence to do violence to the general scope." The solution was to recreate the context of the whole poem. According to Qian Zhongshu, "The text must be interpreted in its context" (2008: 279). The meaning of a poem should be interpreted by considering the context. Of course, the above is a discussion from a linguistic perspective. The other approach is *yi yi ni zhi* 以意逆志, to meet the author's *zhi* 志 with one's own *yi* 意. To facilitate further analysis, the relationship between *yi* 意 and *zhi* 志 must be clarified. What does *yi* 意 refer to? In *Shuowen,* it is interpreted as *zhi* 志. *Yi* 意 is the linguistic form of *zhi* 志, which is implicit. *Yi* 意 is revealed by *yan* 言 (literally text), and *zhi* 志 is revealed by *yi* 意. If *yan* is the signifier, *yi* is the signified, and the combination of the two constitutes a sign of *zhi*. The fact that *zhi* 志 is interpreted as *yi* 意 means they were interchangeable unless indicated otherwise (Duan, 2006: 502).

Then, to whom does "one" in "to meet the author's will with one's own thoughts" refer? Many scholars offer their views and interpret it in two ways. The school represented by Zhao Qi and Zhu Xi believes "one" refers to the reader, while the school represented by Wu Qi believes it refers to the author. Considering the text, I tend to agree with the former. First, the "thought" conveyed by the book was grasped in getting rid of "insist[ing] on one term to do violence to a sentence" and "[insisting] on a sentence to do violence to the general scope." (Of course, the "thought" here is not necessarily the author's "will," which is analyzed below.) Second, the process of "meeting" refers to the analysis of whether the "thought" drawn from the textual form of the poem is equivalent to the "will" of the author. According to Zhang Bowei, the philosophical basis of this process is the Confucian theory of human nature advocated by scholars like Mencius, "Human thinking is similar. That's why one can meet others' will with one's own thoughts" (2002: 3–29). With this in mind,

it is easier to understand why most scholars adhere to the argument that "one" refers to the reader. Zhao Qi suggests that "one's thought refers to the thought of some scholars (readers); as human thinking is similar, it is not inappropriate to meet the will of the poets with one's own thoughts" (Ruan, 1980: 2735). As human thinking is similar, readers can understand the author's ideas with their own ideas. Zhu Xi of the Song Dynasty offers a similar interpretation (1983b: 306), as does Zhu Ziqing (1996: 4), a modern essayist and democrat in China. Both agree that "thought" refers to the thought of readers. Therefore, "to meet the general scope with one's own thoughts" is to interpret the work with one's own thought to explore the will of the author. In this way, on one hand, the poet reveals his/her "feelings" and "will" through the poem. On the other, the reader explores the "will" of the poet based on the textual meaning of the poem according to the principle of similarity in human thinking. In both cases, they rely on the semiotic text.

A literary work is the semiotic carrier of the author's "will," generally involving the author's motivation for creation and specific references. However, once published, the work has its own subjectivity and the author's intention is not exactly the same as the meaning of the text. Indeed, when the author chooses the signs to express his/her thoughts and feelings, there is a distance between his/her thoughts and feelings and the signs he/she chooses to express them. Zhuangzi, a representative figure of the Taoist School, is a pioneer in this discussion, stating that words cannot express all one intends to say (Guo, 2004: 757). In other words, artistic signs do not always convey the author's feelings. Once a work is independent, its meaning is unlikely to equate to the author's intention. In addition, when the author chooses signs for his/her meaning, his/her choices must be familiar to the public. Otherwise, meaning cannot be effectively transmitted. In this case, the work becomes the public wealth of individuals and can be interpreted by different readers in different ways. From the viewpoint of readers' reception, the artistic value of a work can only be realized if it is consumed by readers. Otherwise, it is merely a collection of semiotic texts. Therefore, a work of art is not a true "work" until it comes into contact with the readers. However, because of the different experiences, perspectives, and starting points of the recipients' interpretation, different recipients will understand a work in different ways. Lu Xun comments in his discussion on the different responses to *A Dream of Red Mansions*, "While Confucian scholars find (in it) illustrations of the *Book of Changes*, moralists discover prostitution, gifted scholars see romance, revolutionaries revolution, and gossipers secrets" (2005: 179). Because of the differences in understanding and acceptance, the interpreted meaning differs and may wander far from the author's intention. Here lies the value of Mencius' theory of "meeting the author's will with one's own thoughts."

As such, Mencius' theory created a new theoretical space for ancient Chinese hermeneutics.

> On one hand, he supports the idea that the author's intention is the goal of all interpretations and advocates the so-called "hermeneutics dominated by the theory of intention." On the other hand, his way to achieve this goal depends on the subjective speculation of the reader, which means he acknowledges the legitimacy of speculations of different readers. Such being the case, a "pluralistic hermeneutics" is developed (Zhou, 2003: 47–48).

This type of interpretation is popular in that it recognizes the reader's subjective initiative and affirms the importance of the reader in reconstructing the meaning of the text.

3.3.2 Semiotic Thought on "Understand(ing) a Person by Studying His/Her History"

In general, the meaning of a text can be interpreted in two equally important ways: grammatical interpretation based on the literal meaning of the work and psychological interpretation based on the original meaning of the author. Mencius attached great importance to the author's intention in the process of textual interpretation. His "understanding a person by studying his/her history" was based on the author's original intention and is significant for the ancient Chinese theory of textual interpretation. It helped establish the basic tradition of traditional Chinese hermeneutics: determine the context first and then proceed to understand the meaning of the text by considering the context and interpreting the author's will. Semiotically, this theory is a pragmatic proposition. It considers not only the basic literal meaning of a poem but also how the reader interprets its meaning in a textual structure. In other words, Mencius' theory marks the beginning of the tradition of interpretation of Chinese poetics. In fact, the theoretical practice of poetry interpretation has also created a reception history of poetics, rich in hermeneutic elements. Chen Wenzhong observes, "In the reception history of Chinese poetry there is a hermeneutics with Chinese characteristics" (1996: 130). Interpretation is a reception and the direct form of expression of reception by means of texts. However, both interpretation and reception focus on the generation of meaning, which is at the core of semiotics.

Ancient Chinese poetics was rich in hermeneutic elements, among which Mencius' "understand(ing) a person by studying his/her history" and "meet(ing) the author's will with one's own thoughts" were the two most influential. These two paths of the hermeneutics of Chinese literature had profound consequences for the hermeneutics of classical poetics. The interpretation method of "understand(ing) a person by studying his/her history" is developed in *Mencius*:

> Mencius said to Wan Zhang, "The scholar whose virtue is most distinguished in a village shall make friends of all the virtuous scholars in the village. The scholar whose virtue is most distinguished throughout a state shall make friends of all the virtuous scholars of that state. The scholar whose virtue is most distinguished throughout the kingdom shall make friends of all the virtuous scholars of the kingdom. When a scholar feels that his friendship with all the virtuous scholars of the kingdom is not sufficient to satisfy him, he proceeds to ascend to consider the men of antiquity. He repeats their poems, and reads their books, and as he does not know what they were as men, to ascertain this, he considers their history. This is to ascend and make friends of the men of antiquity." (Chen, 2014: 115)

As the ancients had passed away, to make friends with them, one must read their poems and books and communicate with them spiritually through written materials. Jiao Xun remarks, "If you want to make friends with the ancients, how can you

know whether they are of moral integrity? Well, to figure it out, you have to read their poems and books to understand the people and their time" (1987: 726). As ancient written materials may be obscure because of their age, it is necessary to understand an author's social background, life experience, friendship with others, and so on to understand his/her poems and books, thus communicating with him/her spiritually despite the spatial–temporal distance. Zhu Xi proposes that "to figure out the background is to study the deeds of the ancients in their context, and to observe their words is to study whether their words are in line with their deeds" (1983b: 324). However, some people are not consistent in their words and deeds; thus, it is necessary to understand a person's moral sentiments by combining his/her words and deeds with the background of the time.

The hermeneutic thinking of "understand(ing) a person by studying his/her history" has a positive effect. Zhou Guangqing argues, "It considers the background of the work in an all-round way, especially the age and society in which the work is produced and the social problems and cultural spirit it may reflect. It emphasizes an overall understanding of the author: the background and mentality of the author and the way he/she reacts in the face of different questions" (2002: 337). Based on this theory, the methods of interpretation and acceptance of Chinese literature revolve around two lines. The first is to grasp the content and ideological implications of a work by studying the author's life experiences and social background with the help of chronology and biography. The second is to study the reasons for the creation of a work and what it signifies—its "original meaning"—using chronicles and reference materials. The first line is based on the macro level and the second on the micro level.

Influenced by the thought of "understand(ing) a person by studying his/her history," when people study the literary thoughts of an author, they often consider his/her life experiences and history to better understand his/her behavior, hopefully contributing to better understanding his/her literary thoughts. Conversely, an author's moral sentiments and ideological attitude can also be perceived through his/her works. Zhou Yukai refers to this method as "the circle of understanding," pointing out that

> to know the "will" of the text, we must first understand what kind of person the author is, while to understand what kind of person the author is, we must first analyze the background of his/her time. In other words, by examining the influence of the time on the author, we can understand the moral sentiments and thoughts of the author, and in turn, can understand the true intentions of the texts (2003: 54).

As Sima Qian writes, "When I read *Li Sao*, *Tian Wen*, *Evocation*, and *Lament for the Chu Capital*, I felt grieved for the will of Qu Yuan and could not help shedding tears when getting to the part where he threw himself into the Milou River. I was touched by his moral integrity" (1982: 2503). To understand Qu Yuan's works, Sima Qian tried to understand his moral sentiments. To understand his moral sentiments, he tried to examine the influence of the time on him, and by learning his moral sentiments, the implications of his works could be learnt, facilitating the understanding of his moral sentiments.

Literary texts are presented with verbal signs. These texts are the externalization of the author's inner feelings. It is necessary to befriend the ancients and understand

their inner feelings by reading their works. If the objective is "to know the author's will," then "to know the author and his/her background" can be considered the means. By "knowing the background" and examining the author's words and deeds, we "know the author," which will facilitate our understanding of the "text" (the work itself) and allow us to "know the ideas," the author's inner feelings reflected by the work. One key in this process of interpretation is "knowing the background," namely recreating the context. To reproduce the context to investigate the author's intentions falls within the scope of pragmatism. This method is frequently used in the interpretation of ancient poetry and prose. For example, when selecting the poems of the Tang Dynasty, Gao Bing of the Ming Dynasty comments, "One can know a poet by reading his/her poem, one can know his/her history by studying the poet, and with the background of the time known, one can comment on the thoughts and style of his/her poem" (1993: 59). In other words, one must study a work by considering the background of the time and knowing the author. Huang Sheng of the early Qing Dynasty comments in *A Summary of Du Fu's Poems*, "If one cannot study a poem by learning the poet first, he is not likely to get its profound meaning or understand its innovative style and witty words. Only if you imagine yourself to be there with the poet, strolling by the flower-dotted brook or in the thatched pavilion, can you expect to grasp the intention of the poet" (2009: 20). Therefore, "to study a poem by learning the poet first" means the reader must immerse himself/herself in the context in which the poem was written to grasp its meaning in this recreated context.

These examples are all applications of the theory of "understand(ing) a person by studying his/her history," which emphasizes the knowledge of the author in his/her environment to better perceive the specific referents of his/her work. Wang Guowei summarizes the two main methods of interpreting ancient poetry with Mencius' theories in *Introduction to the Annotations and Chronicles of the Poetry of Li Shangyin*, "Chronicles and annotations are indispensable for poetry because the former provides the background of the time while the latter helps reveal the will of the poet" (2001: 717). Chronicles focus on the study of issues beyond the literary works, the context in which meaning is produced, and recapture its true meaning by placing the text in context, which belongs to pragmatism. Conversely, annotations focus on the study of words and phrases, which belong to semantics. Combining the two means interpreting poetry will no longer be a mystery.

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Chapter 4
Semiotic Thoughts in Taoism

Throughout history, discussions on traditional Chinese philosophy have invariably mentioned Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism together. These are the core elements of the Chinese cultural system of philosophy that contribute to the construction of a specific Chinese national tradition. While religion is a cornerstone of Western culture, the philosophies of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism occupy the same place in Chinese culture. These philosophies offer different perspectives on the nature of the universe and life and embody the views, values, and beliefs of the Chinese people.

As a philosophical tradition, Taoism is a later invention, generally believed to have come into being at the beginning of the Han Dynasty (roughly the second century BCE). Chen Ping is quoted as saying, "All my crafty devices run counter to the Taoist Way" (Sima, 1982: 2062). In addition, in *Records of the Historian*, philosophers of the previous several centuries are classified into six schools, Taoism being the last one. It continues that "Taoists advocate doing nothing (for the sake of doing) but claim that nothing fails to be achieved. Their actions are easy to be carried out, but their words are difficult to understand. The theoretical foundation of Taoism is emptiness and emphasizes obeying the nature law" (Sima, 1982: 3292). Feng Youlan explains that the metaphysics and social philosophy of this school is centered around the concept of non-being, which is the *Tao* or the Way, and its concentration in the individual as the natural virtue of man, which is *Te*, is translated as "virtue" but better rendered as the "power" inherent in every individual thing (Fung, 1966: 31).

Academic ideas of a Taoist nature had been articulated well before the time of Laozi and Zhuangzi and development of the term. Evidence is readily available in the *Tao Te Ching* commonly known in English as *Tao Te Ching*. For example, we are told that "the skillful masters (of the *Tao*) in old times, with a subtle and exquisite penetration, comprehended its mysteries, and were deep (also) so as to elude men's knowledge" (Zhu, 1984: 57). Furthermore, "The ancients who showed their skill in practicing the *Tao* did so not to enlighten the people, but to make them simple and

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ignorant" (Zhu, 1984: 263). Both examples prove that before Laozi's time, people were exploring the Way, the *Tao*.

Unlike Mohism and Confucianism, Taoism is less organized, and its members are only loosely connected. It is difficult to relate the subgroups by inheritance. Between Laozi and Zhuangzi, the two most famous Taoists, the latter learned from the teachings of the former even though they are two centuries apart.

Laozi can be regarded as the integrator of Taoist learning from the time of the Yellow Emperor (about 2698–2598 BCE) to the end of the Spring and Autumn Period (approximately 771–476 BCE), while Zhuangzi is believed to have synthesized the learning of all Taoists in the Pre-Imperial Age. Their reflections on the debate surrounding a word and meaning, names and substance, and so on inspire further inquiry into the relationship between signs and meaning.

4.1 Contextualization

The Introduction clarified how the sign-related ideas of the Pre-Imperial Age will be studied. Modern semiotic theories enable us to analyze and interpret the semiotic thoughts embedded in the cultural canons of the Pre-Imperial Age and the semiotic approaches implicit in the classics. Though the term semiotics did not exist at that time, related ideas and approaches were found in that period of history.

In the classic texts passed down from the Pre-Imperial Age, concepts like *yan* 言 (words), *xiang* 象 (emblematic symbols), and *yi* 意 (meaning) convey in them ideas concerning signs. In an effort to distinguish between concepts such as *ming* 名 (names), *shi* 实 (substance or actualities), and *wei* 位 (positions, or status), scholars and philosophers of the time adopted approaches commonly found in modern semiotics. To interpret the semiotic concepts of Laozi and Zhuangzi, we must understand them in their contexts and consider the historical background of their learning, the cultural atmosphere they were immersed, and how these factors contribute to their academic studies. Only through contextualization, can we understand the thoughts of Laozi and Zhuangzi and get closer to their academic objectives.

4.1.1 Laozi and Tao Te Ching

The records concerning Laozi in the Pre-Imperial classics are either too short or too ambiguous. The most complete biography of Laozi found to date is in *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian from the first century BCE (Sima, 1982: 2139–2141). Sima Qian believes Laozi is a native of the state of Chu in the South. As Laozi once worked as a historian in charge of the archives of the Zhou, we can assume he must have been an erudite scholar.

Laozi's doctrine emphasizes *wuwei* 无为 (literally, doing nothing; it is generally believed to mean that nothing should be done excessively). Having witnessed the

decline of the Zhou, Laozi retired into a hermit's life. On his travels, Laozi was stopped by the Keeper of Hangu Pass, who admired him for his wisdom and demanded that he write a book. To be able to continue his trip, Laozi wrote a two-volume work consisting of about five thousand characters and then departed. The work is known today as *Laozi* or *Tao Te Ching* (more commonly known in English as *Tao Te Ching*), and the length corresponds with the currently available version.

This record would appear clear and trustworthy were it not for the account that followed, where another two possibilities about the life of Laozi were added (Sima, 1982: 2141). Maybe the great historian was simply trying to be objective and professional, but these records caused endless disputes among later scholars. Opinions vary about Laozi the person and *Laozi* the book. It seemed the dispute would never be settled, until 1993, when a handwritten copy of the *Laozi* was unearthed in Guodian, Jingmen city, in Central China's Hunan province. It was confirmed that the copy was made in the Warring States Period. This discovery provides solid evidence that the dissemination of the book began no later than the middle of the Warring States Period, silencing those with different viewpoints.

It has been suggested that a linguistic perspective can provide insights into this issue, as in any given culture, the language is both indicative and stable. Scholars have insisted:

> Since the words and expressions of a language develop with the passage of time, the history of a book can be detected from the characteristics of the words and expressions peculiar to its time. Because each period of time has some words and expressions that distinguish it from the others, once these words and expressions are located, theoretically speaking, it should be possible to determine when the book was written (Zhang 1982: 325).

It is true that words and expressions in any given language are reflections of a society and its culture. They remain relatively stable over a period, and in the relationship between language and culture,

> the objective social life of a given period of time determines what is conveyed in its language; that is, what is conveyed in the language suffices to mirror the various aspects of the social life of that period. All social phenomena, from economic life to social awareness, have been deposited in its language (Luo, 2009: 106).

Theoretically, this approach is sufficient, but what appears to have been neglected is that when ancient scholars wrote their books, they did not have the luxury of materials that today we regard as necessary. It is commonly known that paper was only accessible to the privileged few until after the early second century when the paper-making process was improved by Cai Lun (61/63?–121), the great innovator. In Laozi's time, word of mouth rather than bamboo slips and silk was likely the dominant media.

Lü Simian points out that when reading the books of the great masters, we should remember that the books should not be regarded as fabrications because of occasional disagreements between the words. For example, some are typical of the Spring and Autumn Period and others peculiar to the Warring States Period. This is similar to reading the collected works of a particular writer. Even when confronted with seemingly conflicting views, we should not rule out the possibility that they were

produced by the same author. As Lü suggested, a better attitude toward this issue is to focus on the academic thoughts in the works and not on particular words to make a judgment about the implied time (Lü, 1995: 102).

From the above, we conclude that the *Tao Te Ching*, as we know it today, is simply a carrier of historical evidence, with the academic thoughts of Laozi at its core and accompanied by those of his followers. Laozi introduced his philosophy but not necessarily in book form. The books survived thanks to the efforts of later scholars who compiled and edited them. However, these efforts necessarily resulted in some expressions of later generations in these books, which, all things considered, is understandable.

Classics like *Zhuangzi*, *The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei*, *The Book of Rites*, and *Records of the Grand Historian* include anecdotes describing how Confucius turned to Laozi for instructions concerning rites. These records prove that Laozi is a contemporary of Confucius and senior to him. As to the question of when *Tao Te Ching* came into existence, the present book is inclined to agree with Chen Guying, who asserts it took shape before *The Analects of Confucius*. Specifically, the major viewpoints of Taoism and Taoist philosophy came about somewhat earlier than those of the Confucians. At the time, academic thought was often diffused by word of mouth and actual publication was rare.

4.1.2 *Zhuangzi the Person and* Zhuangzi *the Book*

The book *Zhuangzi* contains many anecdotes about the man, but considering the deliberate fantasy that characterizes the book as a whole, they are not reliable enough to be termed biographical. Therefore, we must draw on limited historical resources to discover what he was like.

> Zhuang Zhou, better known as Zhuangzi or Master Zhuang, was a native of Meng. He once served as an official in the lacquer garden. He lived at the same time as King Hui (370–319 BCE) of Liang and King Xuan (319–301 BCE) of Qi. His learning drew on different sources, but the essence could be traced back to that of Laozi. He wrote a book in 100,000 characters or more, most of which was in the form of *yuyan* (somewhat like a fable in English, but a more general term).

> King Wei (?–329 BCE) of Chu, having heard about Zhuangzi, admired him for his ideas and writings. He sent messengers with valuable gifts to invite him to his state, promising to make Zhuangzi chief minister. Zhuangzi, however, upon knowing this, merely laughed and said to them, "One thousand measures of gold is really a lot of money; chief minister, a highly respected position indeed. But have you ever seen the bulls for sacrifices? They are well fed for years and well dressed for the occasion. Sacrifice is what they have been living for. At that time, even if they wanted to give up the delicious food and beautiful clothes and decided to be a despised pig instead, would it be possible? Go away, do not defile me. I would rather not seek any governmental position so I can stay away from worldly bondage and enjoy my own free will."[1] (Sima, 1982: 2143–2145)

[1] The translation here is ours, with some translated excerpts from Burton Watson and Feng Youlan (better known in the English-speaking world as Fung Yulan) as valuable references.

To facilitate discussions about his sign-related thought, we must further examine the time of Zhuangzi, his cultural identity, and the relationship between Zhuangzi the person and *Zhuangzi* the book. Indeed, a person can be better understood in his context.

Regarding Zhuangzi's life, there is currently no agreement on the time of either his birth or death. Scholars do agree that he lived in the middle of the Warring States Period (about the third century BCE), and the consensus is that his lifetime was characterized by wars and disturbances. It was a time when the Hundred Schools were contending for supremacy, with scholars wandering from one state to another seeking recognition and employment. These general notes on the features of his time may help us better understand Zhuangzi's academic thoughts.

Furthermore, more attention should be paid to Zhuangzi's cultural identity than to the place of his family origin. The Pre-Imperial cultures, viewed chronologically, include the culture of the Yin or Shang Period and that of the Zhou Period. Viewed geographically, they comprise the Qi and Lu cultures (in what is known today as Shandong province), the culture of Three Jin (mostly in what is known today as Shanxi province), of Ba and Shu (in roughly what is known today as Sichuan province in the Southwest), of Jing Chu (approximately in what is now Hubei province), and of Wu and Yue (roughly in what is now Zhejiang and Jiangshu provinces).

Here, identity refers to the interpersonal or social role a person plays when he addresses his audience or interprets the signs used by others (Zhao, 2011: 346). What then is the cultural identity of Zhuangzi? It is generally accepted that Zhuangzi's family originated in Meng in the State of Song, where the descendants of the Shang Kings were relocated as rulers after the Shang Period was conquered by the Zhou people of western China around eleventh century BCE. As such, the inhabitants of the State of Song are likely to be descendants of the Shang Kings. In *Zhuangzi*, the customs of the State of Song are described. The book is powerful and liberal in its style, and rich and colorful in its diction and rhetoric, characteristics that are typical of the nobility and too luxurious for ordinary people. In terms of his cultural identity, Zhuangzi is therefore more likely a member of the upper class. That "he once served as an official in the lacquer garden," however, suggests he was not in power, something further proven by the descriptions of his life in *Zhuangzi*.

With this in mind, the relationship between Zhuangzi and the state of Chu should be examined. *Zhuangzi* is rich in expressions of the Chu dialect and includes some of its local legends and folktales. The imaginative writing that makes *Zhuangzi* a romantic and fascinating book often reminds readers of *Chuci*[2] and Qu Yuan (340–278 BCE), the great patriot and poet of Chu. Considering that the State of Song was constantly invaded or threatened by its more powerful neighbor Chu, cultural exchanges between the two states were inevitable. Laozi, whom Zhuangzi admires, was also a native of Chu, so while learning and understanding Laozi's doctrines, it would be natural for Zhuangzi to be influenced by the Chu culture.

[2] Literally *Songs of Chu*, an anthology of Chinese poetry traditionally attributed to Qu Yuan and Song Yu from the Warring States Period.

Therefore, we conclude that Zhuangzi's cultural identity includes elements of both the Yin or Shang and the state of Chu and that he belongs to the cultural system of the Chu but retains elements of the Yin or Shang.

We must also examine the relationship between Zhuangzi the person and *Zhuangzi* the book. A *Zhuangzi* made up of fifty-two chapters was listed in a bibliography compiled at the end of the first century BCE and preserved in the "Treatise on Literature" of the *Hanshu* (Zhuangzi, 2013: xviii). The present version of thirty-three chapters was first edited by Guo Xiang (died 312 AD), the great commentator, whose insightful commentary was enthusiastically accepted by later scholars to the extent that it has been the authorized version since the Tang Dynasty (618–907).

Guo Xiang divided the thirty-three chapters into three groups: seven chapters known as *neipian* (inner chapters), fifteen known as *waipian* (outer chapters), and eleven known as *zapian* (miscellaneous chapters). The authorship of *Zhuangzi* is disputed, as is the case for most Pre-Imperial classics. There is no agreement on whether the book was written by the master himself or by his followers and disciples. Only after the fourteenth century did scholars eventually agree that the inner chapters were written by Zhuangzi himself and the remainder by later scholars.

However, we suspect this claim might not be true. As quoted from Lü Simian in our discussion on Laozi and *Tao Te Ching*, most masters in the Pre-Imperial Age did not write books. What we read today bearing their names was more likely written by their disciples and followers, who expounded on their masters' teachings and collected them in book form. This phenomenon is closely related to the masters' attitude toward writing and to the media available for cultural transmission. Probably, the situation is that the founder of a school first came up with his particular ideas and then instructed his disciples and followers. Restricted by the writing and publishing conditions of the time, it is unlikely they possessed textbooks, as we do today. Their education was instead more word of mouth. Knowledge and learning were passed on from one generation to the next, until the point when later disciples eventually wrote down the texts and composed them as a book. The book's final contents were the accumulated wisdom and teachings of generations of scholars.

Likely, this is the case with *Zhuangzi*. In the inner chapters alone, we found that the term "Zhuangzi" (literally, Master Zhuang) appears nine times. The term "zi" (master) is commonly regarded as highly complimentary, referring to erudite gentlemen with virtues and status. It is also sometimes used by masters and disciples to show respect for one another. If the inner chapters had been written by Zhuangzi, how could he possibly call himself "Master Zhuang"?

Based on the discussion above, we believe *Zhuangzi* could be better described as the collected works of Zhuangzi and his followers. It aims to introduce the academic ideas of their branch of Taoism, with Zhuangzi's teachings at its core and with additional interpolations by later scholars. Therefore, the ideas of Zhuangzi and his branch of Taoism are in the main preserved *Zhuangzi*.

4.2 Elimination of Names and Belittlement of Rituals: An Inquiry into *Laozi*

Laozi gives serious thought to names and rituals, which are of great semiotic significance. Semiotics is a recent concept, but the ancient Chinese philosopher does examine how signs make the world meaningful. His contribution provides us with a better understanding of the academic ideas and culture of the Pre-Imperial Age.

4.2.1 Naming: Semiotization of the World, Order Out of Chaos

Charles William Morris, the American semiotician and philosopher, explains:

> Since the unique thing about the human being is that how he will act toward something is largely dependent on how he signifies that something, signs are the tool of tools for man-making (Morris, 1948: 54).

In other words, humans have created signs, but these signs influence cognition and the way we express ourselves. The first chapter of the *Tao Te Ching* reflects on how human beings created "names." By examining this part, we may find the key to understanding Laozi's ideas on signs:

> The *Tao* that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao.
>
> The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name. (Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things.
>
> Always without desire we must be found,
>
> If its deep mystery we would sound;
>
> But if desire always within us be,
>
> Its outer fringe is all that we shall see.
>
> Under these two aspects, it is really the same;
>
> but as development takes place, it receives the different names.
>
> Together we call them the Mystery.
>
> Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful (Zhu, 1984: 3–7).

In this chapter, the objective of the five thousand characters of the *Tao Te Ching* is announced and, therefore, should not be neglected (Zhu, 1984: 4). According to Laozi, things are ever-changing, but behind the changes seems to be something "constant." "The way" is the name given to changes in general, but some things always remain "unchanged." These are known as "the constant." In other words, "the way that can be spoken of, the name that can be named, both these things tend to be concrete and specific, and therefore are not the constant" (Lou, 1980: 1). The way that can be spoken of is something with forms that can be detected and, thus,

something physical. The constant way is metaphysical, something understandable but inexpressible. There used to be no signs in the world. Signs are created and developed to facilitate interpersonal communication. Things are changing, and so are names. The name that stays unchanged is "the constant name." According to Laozi, the way that can be spoken of is not the constant way, and the name that can be named is not the constant name. Therefore, what Laozi discusses here is the relationship between thought and existence, or between names and substance. "The constant way" is beyond words; therefore, there is no "constant name." That is, the constant way has no name, and as Laozi describes it, "The *Tao* is hidden, and has no name" (Zhu, 1984: 171). Without a name, the way cannot be conveyed by words.

The materialist conception of history suggests that a man's social existence determines his consciousness. With this comes a paradox: linguistic signs "create" the referents. Liu Xi of the Han Dynasty points out that "names are to make clear the distinctions between things" (Liu, 2008: 116). Names distinguish one thing from another so that order will come out of chaos. Without the names of the world's myriad creatures, it will be impossible to tell them apart. In this sense, "the named was the mother of the myriad creatures." Names are what we know the creatures by. Saussure asserts, "There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language" (Saussure, 1959: 112). This is a perfect footnote to Laozi's ideas. With evolution, humans appear in this world. As humans develop, linguistic signs appear. All the cultural phenomena of human societies, including languages, arts, religions, and myths, are but products of the semiotic activities of human beings. The names of various kinds of things did not exist until after humans developed linguistic signs, without which there would be no names.

With the advancement of human society, linguistic signs are gradually enriched. People invent different names for things according to their respective properties. This is recorded in the *Tao Te Ching* as, "As soon as it proceeds to action, it has a name. When it once has that name, (men) can know to rest in it" (Zhu, 1984: 130). Names are given according to their properties, and there is a limit to the properties of things. Once the limit is exceeded, properties will change. What follows will inevitably be a change in names, or otherwise there will be a disagreement between the representamen and the object.

When names are given, they embody the value judgment of the name-givers. When these names are learned, the established value system is acquired with them. This is particularly true after the Duke of Zhou established the *zhouli* (literally, the Rites of Zhou) and created the *yayue* (literally, graceful music). Names, graduating into synonyms of titles and status with ever-greater ethical importance attached became tools for social management. This phenomenon was no mystery to Laozi, whose insights led to his almost negative comments on naming.

4.2.2 Elimination of Names: Desemiotization, Settlement of Disputes, and Restoration of Order

With the invention of linguistic signs, order comes to an otherwise chaotic world. A well-organized society depends on the adoption of indices and symbols. Rituals, proprieties, and ranking systems are all examples of man-made indices. The ranking list demonstrates the different statuses of those concerned and how well they will be rewarded. The same is true of the ranking system in contemporary academia, according to which there are professors, associate professors, lecturers, etc., each with different task requirements and payment levels. Ranks and positions can be compared to representamen, and the corresponding powers and resources can be viewed as objects. As such, the interpretant will be: the higher the rank, the better the treatment. Therefore, many people naturally pursue high ranks, and in so doing, they aspire to the benefits these high ranks may bring.

For Laozi, "names" are the source of disputes and disturbances. To settle these disputes, we should stop naming and ranking, as these signs bring people different statuses and justify their different treatment.

Any object is semiotized when it conveys more than its practical use. The object becomes a carrier of meaning, a combination of sign and function. Chapter 12 of the *Tao Te Ching* refers to "objects rare and strange" (Zhu, 1984: 46), interpreted by some scholars to mean natural things like metals and stones. Once metals such as gold and silver come to stand for wealth, and pearls and jades become symbols of status, they are no longer the purely natural things they once were. Instead, they have become semiotized wealth, which people fight each other for. They can lead many astray, making them "go against their nature." The source of the trouble is again semiotization.

Laozi reflects on this point in Chapter 44 (Zhu, 1984: 179–180). Reputation, wealth, or life, which is most important? In the real world, many people suffer great losses searching for fame and fortune, which is why Laozi raised these questions. He wants to warn them of the danger. If it had not been for semiotization, fame and fortune would not have become what they are. Bearing this in mind, people will know better than to lose themselves in the pursuit of vanity.

Seeing that over-semiotization brings harm to human nature, Laozi's solution is that desemiotization will contribute to the restoration of order by helping people avoid the pursuit of fame and fortune. Chapter 28 reads:

> Who knows his manhood's strength,
> Yet still his female feebleness maintains;
> As to one channel flow the many drains,
> All come to him, yea, all beneath the sky.
> Thus he the constant excellence retains;
> The simple child again, free from all stains.
>
> Who knows how white attracts,
> Yet always keeps himself within black's shade,

> The pattern of humility displayed,
> Displayed in view of all beneath the sky;
> He in the unchanging excellence arrayed,
> Endless return to man's first state has made.
> Who knows how glory shines,
> Yet loves disgrace, nor ever for it is pale;
> Behold his presence in a spacious vale,
> To which men come from all beneath the sky.
> The unchanging excellence completes its tale;
> The simple infant man in him we hail.
>
> The unwrought material, when divided and distributed, forms vessels.
> The sage, when employed, becomes the Head of all the Officers (of government);
> and in his greatest regulations he employs no violent measures.
> (Zhu, 1984: 112–114)

The authenticity of some of the quoted text here is subject to doubt, and various interpretations have been offered since ancient times. Despite the discrepancies, some key words in this part can still enhance our understanding of Laozi's idea.

We now examine "the simple child again." The Chinese word 婴儿 [*ying er*, babe/infant/simple child] is used numerous times in *Tao Te Ching*. For example, "When one gives undivided attention to the (vital) breath, and brings it to the utmost degree of pliancy, he can become as a (tender) babe" (Zhu, 1984: 39) and "I am like an infant which has not yet smiled" (Zhu, 1984: 81). Despite the difference in diction in the quotations, all these "babes/infants/simple children" are associated with purity, innocence, and carefreeness. They have not yet acquired the world of meanings created by adults using signs and can therefore "return to being the unwrought material," something without artificial decorations. "The unwrought material, when divided and distributed, forms vessels," and goes back to what it used to be: that is, it is desemiotized. The conclusion is that "in his greatest regulations, he employs no violent measures." Things are not to be named and grouped. As discussed earlier, the process of naming involves value judgments, which can be illustrated by the many opposing terms in Chapter Two, such as "beautiful/ugly" and "good/bad" (Zhu, 1984: 9). Acquiring these terms means accepting their value judgments at the same time, which leads to an artificial definition and classification of the world they inhabit. This will result in disputes between people. Laozi's assertion that things are not to be named (Zhu, 1984: 114) and grouped amounts to saying that the names by which things are grouped should be done away with.

By using signs, human beings have created rich and colorful cultures. Culture can then be seen as a collection of all the sign-using behaviors of mankind (Zhao, 2015). Unfortunately, in the real world, many people kneel before their own creations and become lost in the jungle of signs.

Note that Laozi does not deny the basic needs of humankind. Several times in *Tao Te Ching* he uses the phrases "fills their bellies" (Zhu, 1984: 15) and "the sage seeks

to satisfy (the craving of) the belly, and not the (insatiable longing of the) eyes" (Zhu, 1984: 46). As Xu Fuguan notices,

> The freedom from desires advocated by Laozi is not to deny the biological and natural needs of human beings. He opposes any desire more than necessary (Xu, 2014: 310).

Laozi the wise man realized that in a world flooded by signs, human nature is likely to be lost and humans themselves will be harmed. In a sense, Laozi can be said to be the first to foresee a crisis caused by the abuse of signs. To avert this crisis, his suggestion is to follow this path:

> If this transformation became to me an object of desire,
> I would express the desire by the nameless simplicity.
> Simplicity without a name
> Is free from all external aim.
> With no desire, at rest and still,
> All things go right as of their will (Zhu, 1984: 147).

As the myriad creatures grow and ripen, desire raises its head. To deal with greediness, the therapy prescribed by Laozi is the "elimination of names." Without names and statuses, there would be no reason for people to fight each other. Disputes would be settled, social order would be restored, and we would be blessed with a peaceful world. All things considered, Laozi believes that "names," which are responsible for insatiable desires and incessant social disturbances, should be eliminated.

4.2.3 Li *(Rituals) and* Yi *(Righteousness): Presence of Signs and Absence of Meanings*

How did rituals and righteousness originate? According to the Discourse on Ritual Principles, Book 19 of *Xunzi:*

> How did ritual principles arise? I say that men are born with desires which if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. Such contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder, so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction. They so fashioned their regulations that desires should not want for the things that satisfy them and goods would not be exhausted by the desires. In this way, the two of them, desires and goods, sustained each other over the course of time. This is the origin of ritual principles. Thus, the meaning of ritual is to nurture (Wang, 1988: 346).

For Xunzi, human beings are born with desires, which must be controlled so they will not result in conflicts and collisions. To fulfill this task, rituals and righteousness should be introduced. By this means, people will be offered what is appropriate for their positions in the hierarchy. Rituals are simply a sign system of hierarchy, but

they can help regulate human behavior and interpersonal relations. By the Spring and Autumn periods, rituals and music had been destroyed and the sign system could no longer keep order in society. As described in the *Shiji*, Confucius, who was determined to restore balance to society by revitalizing the rituals and music of the West Zhou Period, consulted Laozi on the topic of rituals. Laozi answered in a roundabout way, highlighting, "What you are talking about concerns merely the words left by people who have rotted along with their bones" (Sima, 1982: 2139–2140). In other words, the rituals have become inappropriate for the occasion, negating their significance.

From *Tao Te Ching*, we get the impression that Laozi advocates the way of nature in preference to man-made rituals. He seems to believe that virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, rituals, and intellectual awareness are favored because they are hard to find in the real world. "When the Great Tao (Way or Method) ceased to be observed, benevolence and righteousness came into vogue. (Then) appeared wisdom and shrewdness, and there ensued great hypocrisy. When harmony no longer prevailed throughout the six kinships, filial sons found their manifestation; when the states and clans fell into disorder, loyal ministers appeared" (Zhu, 1984: 72–73). Benevolence, righteousness, filial children, and loyal ministers exist because the corresponding meanings are missing. In other words, the signs are present because the meanings are absent. As Shi Deqing explains,

> The *Tao* does not mean to love the ten thousand things, yet each and every thing is where it should be; benevolence and righteousness are meant to love the ten thousand things, yet what they bring about is nothing but discrimination between closeness and distance, between the humble and the noble (Shi, 2009: 59).

The ten thousand things used to follow their natural course, until the Great Tao fell into disuse. Hypocrisy has been brought about by cleverness; filial children are praiseworthy only when the six relations are at variance. The only reason a particular virtue is advocated may be because it is missing in the present real world. Essentially, the sign is there because the meaning is absent. Benevolence and righteousness, filial piety, and loyalty are terms emphasized because the corresponding meanings no longer exist. The absence of the meaning calls for the presence of the sign.

In his lifetime, Laozi witnessed the decline of the Zhou Period. Seeing that the nobles fought for fame and fortune in the name of protecting the rituals of the Zhou, he reflected on the true meanings of rituals and righteousness, sought to find the causes behind the disorder, and eventually conceptualized his insightful views.

Rituals, closely linked with names and statuses, had long become an important means of ruling in the West Zhou Period. Analyzing the relationships between rituals, names, and statuses, Zhan Jianfeng points out:

> Since the West Zhou Period, an important tool for the feudal lords to maintain their domination is by rectifying names and giving appropriate names, because names are closely related to statuses and rituals. Each name has its corresponding status and therefore its proper ritual. Furthermore, these are the only status and ritual proper for the name. Any attempt to adopt statuses and rituals improper for the name will be severely punished so that in a hierarchical society, the noble and the humble will be treated differently, the upper and the lower can be told apart (Zhan, 1982: 188).

Laozi, a learned scholar and careful observer, did not fail to notice this fact. As pointed out in Chapter 38 of *Tao Te Ching*:

> (Those who) possessed the highest (sense of) propriety were (always seeking) to show it, and when men did not respond to it, they bared the arm and marched up to them.
>
> Thus it was that when the *Tao* was lost, its attributes appeared; when its attributes were lost, benevolence appeared; when benevolence was lost, righteousness appeared; and when righteousness was lost, the proprieties appeared.
>
> Now propriety is the attenuated form of leal-heartedness and good faith, and is also the commencement of disorder (Zhu, 1984: 152).

The loss of loyalty, trust, and other virtues is the real reason people may fight over trivialities. Hence, Laozi is justified in claiming that the rituals are "the attenuated form of leal-heartedness and good faith, and is also the commencement of disorder." As moral standards degraded, rulers resorted to rituals to control behavior, so that order can be restored. Unfortunately, only the forms of the rituals remain. In Laozi's time, the rituals maintained by the feudal lords were merely forms and lacked content. Political campaigns have been launched and sometimes wars waged in the name of rituals, which are certainly abuses of the term. Therefore, it is understandable that Laozi's comments on rituals and righteousness are unfavorable. The sign system of rituals and righteousness had degraded into a collection of empty sign vehicles.

Laozi thinks deeply about the relationship between rituals and people, and notes that "in the kingdom, the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people" (Zhu, 1984: 231). In other words, the more restrictions people feel, the less likely they are to lead a rich and happy life. Laozi argues that rituals should be ended and the *Tao* advocated instead.

4.2.4 *Worshiping* Tao*: A Metaphysical Reflection on the World of Signs*

Taoism is so named because of Laozi's philosophical emphasis. *Tao* is an abstract term at the core of Laozi's philosophy. According to Laozi, *Tao* refers either to the basic principles by which things move and change, or to the origin of the things concerned. This highly semiotized abstract concept has evolved from concrete images.

Tang Lan (1901–1979), an etymologist, points out that "*Tao*, in its philosophical sense, used to be very popular during the Spring and Autumn Period" (Tang, 1982: 614). At that time, every school had its own "*Tao*." However, *Tao* could not have acquired its meaning in such a short time and must have been a concept developed far back in human history. According to *Shuowen*, the Chinese character 道 comes from a combination of 辶 (walking on a road) and 首 (head of a man), and means path (Duan, 2006: 75). As human thought has become more sophisticated and culture has developed, more meanings have been added to this character:

> Judging from its original meaning of "path," since there is a sense of definite direction, suggesting that it is the inevitable course leading to some particular destination, Tao is used to denote certainty and inevitability perceived in the existence and development of things. Since people are always travelling back and forth along (Tao) the path, Tao has been adopted to refer to the laws of how things move and change in this world. Since people have to follow a certain path to reach their destination, Tao has acquired the meaning of principles that must be followed in the development of everything as well as in human behaviors. Since Tao has provided people with the necessary means by which their goals can be attained, it begins to be considered as the fundamental approach to understand things around us and to solve problems of different kinds (Chen and Bai, 2001: 103).

This understanding of the *Tao* generally fits with the laws of development of languages and signs. An important cultural phenomenon is evident in human languages: one word/character is capable of referring to both concrete things and abstract concepts. In general, the concrete meaning usually comes before the abstract meaning. The Chinese character 节 (*jie*) was originally written as 卩 , which in oracle bone inscriptions, looks like a man kneeling and sitting on his heels. In this character, the knee, which is emphasized, is its concrete meaning. Later, the same character is borrowed to denote credentials, as in the word 符节 (*fujie*). With the development of language and as human thought became more sophisticated, more meanings needed to be expressed. The meanings of 节 are then further enriched: controlling (节制 *jiezhi*), etiquette (礼节 *lijie*), and solar terms (节气 *jieqi*). Therefore, the character later acquired many abstract meanings in addition to its concrete meaning.

The *Tao* held by Laozi has undergone a similar process, namely from the concrete to abstract. His *Tao* "is no longer a particular principle. Instead, it is the universal law that applies to everything. He has developed a system out of the *Tao* preached in the Spring and Autumn Period. This is a great leap-forward in the history of philosophy" (Tang, 1982: 614). This is why his thoughts stand out from the many other theories concerning the *Tao*. For Laozi, the *Tao*, being far and deep beyond words, is so abstract that it defies any attempt to name and describe it:

> Who can of Tao the nature tell?
> Our sight it flies, our touch as well.
> Eluding sight, eluding touch,
> The forms of things all in it crouch;
> Eluding touch, eluding sight,
> There are their semblances, all right.
> Profound it is, dark and obscure;
> Things' essences all there endure.
> Those essences the truth enfold
> Of what, when seen, shall then be told (Zhu, 1984: 88–89).

A more detailed description of the *Tao* is found in Chapter 14 of *Tao Te Ching:*

> We look at it, and we do not see it, and we name it "the Equable." We listen to it, and we do not hear it, and we name it "the Inaudible." We try to grasp it, and do not get hold of it, and we name it "the Subtle." With these three qualities, it cannot be made the subject of description; hence we blend them together and obtain The One. Its upper part is not bright, and its lower

> part is not obscure. Ceaseless in its action, it yet cannot be named, and then it again returns and becomes nothing. This is called the Form of the Formless, and the Semblance of the Invisible; this is called the Fleeting and Indeterminable. We meet it and do not see its Front; we follow it, and do not see its Back. When we can lay hold of the *Tao* of old to direct the things of the present day, and are able to know it as it was of old in the beginning, this is called (unwinding) the clue of Tao (Zhu, 1984: 52–54).

Tao cannot be seen, nor can it be heard or touched. Being colorless, soundless, and imageless, it is indivisible. The properties of the *Tao* will remain unchanged in the dark or daylight. It never ends, is ever beyond words, and eventually returns to emptiness. It is shape without shape, image with substance, and is therefore indistinct and shadowy. How then should something indistinct and shadowy, something unfathomable, be named? Here is the answer Laozi offered:

> There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.
>
> I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the *Tao* (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great (Zhu, 1984: 100).

Laozi believes the simple and natural *Tao* was born before heaven and earth. It has no name, because it has no sound and therefore cannot be heard; it has no color and therefore cannot be seen. That is why it is referred to as "still and formless." The *Tao* is above the myriad creatures. With its unchangeable shape, the *Tao* is recurrent, continually flowing round. The creatures of the world all emerge from the *Tao,* so it is known as "the mother of the world." What then is the name of this something from which everything has developed? Even Laozi does not know its name. Therefore, he gives it "the designation of the *Tao* (the Way or Course)." Making an effort (further) to give it a name, he calls it "The Great." Su Zhe understands it as follows:

> Tao used to have no name. When the Sage notices that all things come out of it, he styles it as the way and gives it the makeshift name of "the great." (Su, 2010: 33–34)

In this part, 字 (*zi*) in the original Chinese version is rendered as "style." The character 字 is a combination of the upper part 宀 (meaning the roof of a building) and lower part 子 (*zi*, meaning child) (Duan, 2006: 743). It originally referred to a child in the house but was later borrowed for a sound denoting a compound character. Based on this analysis, we assume that when Laozi uses 字 to explain 道 (*dao*, the Way), he is actually telling us that the meaning of 道 here is derived through a process of interpretation. This is not unlike the interpretant put forward by Charles S. Peirce in his triadic hypothesis. Zhao Yiheng believes that "with the deepening of understanding on the part of the receptor, the properties of the interpretant concerned will inevitably change" (Zhao, 2014: 9). The different backgrounds and experiences of those analyzing the *Tao* will certainly result in different individual interpretations. The *Tao* is therefore open to unlimited semiosis.

What then does Laozi aim at with the term *Tao*? According to the *Tao Te Ching*, "Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes

its law from the *Tao*. The law of the *Tao* is its being what it is" (*dao fa ziran* 道法自然) (Zhu, 1984: 103). *Ziran* (literally, nature, or what is naturally so) is another important concept in Laozi's academic thought, and the term appears in Chapters 17, 23, and 64. Scholars do not agree on its exact meaning, but the present book agrees with Zhan Jianfeng, who argues that nature as understood by Laozi "is the nature of the natural world, the whole nature (including the essence of nature and natural phenomena)" (Zhan, 1982: 212). The *Tao* advocated by Laozi refers both to the essence of nature and to natural phenomena, to what is naturally so. Therefore, "The law of the *Tao* is its being what it is" means that natural laws and natural phenomena should be respected and that signs like fame and fortune and rituals and righteousness should be eliminated, lifting their restraints on human intelligence and life as a whole. Only in this way can human beings lead a simple and natural life.

4.3 Untroubled Ease and Absolute Freedom: Implications of *Zhuangzi*

Tao Te Ching is a book of wisdom, and so is *Zhuangzi*. We know that Zhuangzi learned from Laozi, but not necessarily exclusively. Zhuangzi, a faithful follower of Laozi, lived in a time not only of fresh ideas but also of darkness and upheaval. In this period, tyrants and selfish officials ruled at will, and ordinary people were abused. The king "deals with his state as if it were a light matter, and has no perception of his errors. He thinks lightly of his people's dying" (Guo, 2004: 132). The people found it difficult to survive and security was always a luxury, which is why *Zhuangzi* disregards the debate about right and wrong and advocates the theory of equality.

Zhuangzi aims to master the meaning of the *Tao* at a higher level, living with untroubled ease and nourishing life, which helps to preserve life and avoid calamity and damage. Zhuangzi notices the damage to humanity caused by the excessive use of names and intelligence. He suggests adjusting the use of signs and their interpretation to the context and insightfully analyzes the relationship between word and meaning. His ideas are effectively and impressively conveyed in three ways.

4.3.1 Abuse of Intelligence for Names with People Striving to Overthrow One Another

Laozi sees through the nature of names and attributes the problem of social disturbances to people fighting for fame and fortune. His solution to the problem is to "press it down with the weight of the nameless uncarved block" (Zhu, 1984: 147). Zhuangzi inherits Laozi's ideas on names. The first chapter of *Tao Te Ching* reads: "(Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things" (Zhu, 1984: 5). The nameless comes

at a time of chaos while the named arrive before there are myriad creatures. Similar expressions are found in *Zhuangzi*:

> In the Grand Beginning (of all things), there was nothing in all the vacancy of space; there was nothing that could be named. It was in this state that there arose the first existence – the first existence, but still without bodily shape. From this, things could then be produced, (receiving) what we call their proper character (Guo, 2004: 424).

"The Grand Beginning" is a time when the world is still in chaos, and the myriad creatures have not yet come into being, let alone their names. "It was in this state that there arose the first existence—the first existence, but still without bodily shape" (Guo, 2004: 425). Laozi shares this idea, as illustrated in Chapter 42 of the *Tao Te Ching*: "The *Tao* produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things" (Zhu, 1984: 174). *Tao* (the way) is the hypostasis of the myriad creatures. It produces "one," the essence of chaos, which has not yet been divided into the two contrary but complementary forces of *yin* and *yang*. Once they appeared, the two forces of *yin* and *yang* interact and result in the production of three, which gives birth to the myriad creatures (Chen, 1984: 232).

From this, it can be understood that "there arose the first existence—the first existence, but still without bodily shape." The One does not have a bodily shape like those of the myriad creatures, but once there is One, there is the possibility for the creatures to develop. This is known as "*Te*" (literally, virtue or power), which each individual thing has obtained from the universal *Tao*. The *Te* (or virtue) of a thing is its natural essence. Laozi says, "All things without exception honor the *Tao*, and exalt its outflowing operation" (Zhu, 1984: 203). The *Tao* is that by which they come to be, and *Te* is that by which they are what they are.

Careful reading of this part reveals the origin of "names." The *Tao* begets the myriad creatures, and names serve to differentiate one from another. Without linguistic signs, there would have been no "names" for the creatures. "Names" come with a deeper understanding of the things surrounding mankind, resulting from highly developed culture and knowledge. Names enable differentiating one thing from another and are meant to meet the specific needs of the people. In the real world, names usually correspond with certain political positions, thus making themselves representamen and the positions objects. However, Zhuangzi thinks differently, expounding his views as follows:

> Discoursing of benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, and good faith; being humble and frugal, self-forgetful and courteous. All this is simply symptomatic of (self-)cultivation. This is what scholars who wish to tranquillize the world, teachers and instructors, men who pursue their studies at home and abroad, are fond of. Discoursing of their great merit and making a great name for themselves, insisting on the ceremonies between ruler and minister, and rectifying the relations between high and low. All this shows their one object to be the promotion of government. This is what officers of the court, men who honor their lord and would strengthen the state and who would do their utmost to incorporate other states with their own, are fond of (Guo, 2004: 535).

Those who wish to tranquilize the world, teachers and instructors, men who pursue their studies at home and abroad, officers of the court, and men who honor their lord

and strengthen the state and who would do their utmost to incorporate other states within their own are all alike in that without exception, they use signs to change the world. The slight differences are that scholars are moderate, including Confucians, while the officers embody the ideas of the Legalists. The shift from instruction in the former to restriction in the latter means that the people, when confronted with a world of legal signs dominated by a system of legal violence, are allowed increasingly fewer choices alongside their ever-deteriorating living conditions.

People fight each other for greater fame and fortune. In other words, these signs are responsible for the calamity. Zhuangzi comments on the phenomenon as follows, "Virtue is dissipated in (the pursuit of) the name for it, and wisdom seeks to display itself in the striving with others. In the pursuit of the name men overthrow one another; wisdom becomes a weapon of contention. Both these things are instruments of evil, and should not be allowed to have free course in one's conduct" (Guo, 2004: 942).

As noted, *Te* is obtained by each individual thing from the universal *Tao*, which has made a thing what it naturally is. Although precious, this *Te* can often get lost in the real world. Zhuangzi believes that chasing fame results in the loss of *Te*. One only shows off one's wisdom to win an argument. Chen Guying summarizes this as, "All conflicts and disputes in the world, when taken as a whole, can be traced back to the use of intelligence in pursuit of names" (Chen, 2009: 118). Names created to meet social needs have degenerated into causes over which human beings come into conflict. Intelligence has been distorted to become a weapon. Names and intelligence could have served human beings better but regrettably have now become "evil weapons" and should not be allowed to have free course in one's conduct.

However, Zhuangzi does not think there is anything inherently wrong with names and intelligence. The trouble is caused by the way they are understood. People fail to see names for what they are and fail to make proper use of intelligence. Many examples are found in *Zhuangzi.* Chapter 4 includes the account of Guan Longfeng and Bi Gan, both in low positions, who offend their rulers in their pursuit of fame, resulting in their own destruction. Yao and Yu, both in high positions, attack cities (the former attacked the states of Congzhi and Xu'ao, and the latter the ruler of Youhu) and leave them ruined and the people slaughtered. The two so-called sages engaged ceaselessly in war: their cravings for whatever they could get were insatiable (Guo, 2004: 139). When facing fame and fortune, even sages and wise men do not know where to stop, let alone ordinary people.

Human knowledge and intelligence are the result of the accumulation of language and thought over time in a certain space. Language and thought are interdependent. The integration of the two distinguishes human languages from the sounds of other animals. People understand and interpret things around them only in particular contexts, whereas the world is ceaselessly moving and changing. Therefore, knowledge of the world amounts to nothing but a frame view. The infinite world is like an immensely huge mirror and our understanding of it is like a finite frame. The light detected through the frame is a tiny part of the whole phenomenon. The limited knowledge humans have acquired was likely affected by the shape of this

frame. With this in mind, we can better understand what conveyed in the fables of Zhuangzi.

Chapter 7 includes a fable to this effect. Shu, the emperor of the South Sea, and Hu, the emperor of the North Sea, were continually meeting in the land of Chaos where they were warmly received by Hundun, the emperor of the central region. To repay the kindness of the host, Shu and Hu agreed that "all men have seven orifices so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hundun alone does not have any. Let's try boring him some." Accordingly, they dug one orifice in him every day. At the end of seven days, Hundun died (Guo, 2004: 330).

Such fables reveal how people attempt to regulate the infinite world with the knowledge and experience they have accumulated to control what they do not know with what they do know. In semiotic terms, this is to "to rectify substance with names." Not surprisingly, the results are usually far from satisfactory.

Zhuangzi lives in a time when both the Confucians and Mohists attempt to advocate their own ideas, often regarding as right whatever the other considers wrong, and vice versa. Both parties are confined by their one-sided views and cannot see things for what they are. Zhuangzi proposes that things be revealed for what they are, so they will not be affected by prejudices. His insights into this problem are well illustrated in "The Adjustment of Controversies," where three types of sounds are discussed (Guo, 2004: 45–46), which are similar to the various types of knowledge. Some of us know the sounds of man, but not the sounds of Earth. Of those who know the sounds of Earth, how many know the sounds of Heaven? In this respect, the authors of this book agree with Feng Youlan:

> The sounds of man consist of the words (yen) that are spoken in the human world. They differ from such "words of earth" as those caused by the wind, insomuch as when words are said, they represent human ideas. They represent affirmations and denials, and the opinions made by each individual from his own particular finite point of view. Being thus finite, these opinions are necessarily one-sided. Yet most men, not knowing that their opinions are based on a finite point of view, invariably consider their own opinions as right and those of others as wrong (Fung, 1966: 111).

Neither language nor thought are without limitations, so it is ridiculous to judge the opinions of others by one's own view.

According to Zhuangzi, "He who acts for the sake of the name of doing so and loses his (proper) self is not the (right) scholar" (Guo, 2004: 232). It is not advisable to violate one's nature and force oneself to do things in a certain way just for the sake of it. It is better to forget about the names and enjoy oneself instead. People can then be known for what they actually are and enjoy what they deserve.

However, Zhuangzi observed that many lose their proper selves in pursuit of names. Chapter 8 ("Webbed Toes") (Guo, 2004: 323) points out that small deceptions only result in a change in direction, but great deceptions lead to the loss of one's proper self. Yu advocated benevolence and righteousness, which are ceaselessly pursued in the world. Essentially, these so-called virtues have changed human nature. From the commencement of the three dynasties onward, very few have not been deceived by external things into changing their own nature: petty men by material gains, scholars by fame, great officials by their families, and sages by the world. Though

their occupations and reputations differ, they have all agreed to alter their nature and sacrifice their personalities. Bo Yi died at the foot of Shouyang Mountain to maintain his fame, and the robber Zhi died on the top of the Eastern Mound in his eagerness for gain. Their deaths had different causes, but they both shortened their own lives and violated their own natures. Different as the names are, the substance is the same. In "The Robber Zhi" (Guo, 2004: 1005), Man Goude comments that gentlemen chase after reputation while petty men are after wealth. Despite the superficial differences, they are almost the same: they have violated the principles of the *Tao* and changed their nature. The advice therefore is to not be a small man who dies for the sake of wealth; do not be a gentleman who sacrifices himself in pursuit of reputation. Return to the *Tao* for your true self and follow what is natural in you. This can be interpreted from a semiotic perspective as returning to a stage where there are no names.

This point is clarified by Xu You in his replies in "Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease" (Guo, 2004: 22–24). Yao proposed to resign the throne to a hermit named Xu You, but Xu replied that as the kingdom was already well governed with Yao as the sovereign, if Xu was to take over, it would only be for the reputation or name of being a wise sovereign. For Xu, "The name is but the guest of the reality." When names and realities are discussed together, names are guests and realities hosts. Names are reflections of the realities. In Pre-Imperial semiotic thought, the relationship between names and substances (or realities) was a hotly debated issue. Xu You explained, "But the name is but the guest of the reality; shall I be playing the part of the guest?" (Guo, 2004: 24). Therefore, it is unwise to sacrifice realities for names, forgetting that the former are major and the latter minor. Having insights into the nature of signs, Xu turned down the offer and returned without hesitation to what was natural. He compared himself to the tailorbird and mole to clarify that he did not need much and therefore did not desire much.

How could a person so free of greediness be deceived by a dazzling world filled with signs? As is cautioned, "Fame is a possession common to all. We should not seek to have much of it" (Guo, 2004: 517). The perfect state to aspire to is to have no thought of fame, and as "Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease" advises, "The Perfect man has no (thought of) self; the Spirit-like man, none of merit; the Sagely-minded man, none of fame" (Guo, 2004: 17). According to Cheng Xuanying:

> The Perfect man, the Spirit-like man, and the Sagely minded man, though different in name, refer to one and the same. He is one with the *Tao*. The sage has transcended the worldly gains and losses and liberated himself from the bondage of the values commonly held. He is capable of resisting the temptations of fame and fortune and certainly will not be involved in the contentions between names and intelligence (Guo, 2004: 22).

Zhuangzi also points out in Chapter 25:

> All things have their different constitutions and modes of actions, but the *Tao* (which directs them) is free from all partiality, and therefore it has no name. Having no name, it therefore does nothing. Doing nothing, there is nothing that it does not do (Guo, 2004: 909).

Laws govern the development of anything and everything, that constitute the *Tao*, and as the *Tao* is that by which all things come to be, it cannot be named. Once

named, its meaning will be definite, and its all-embracing unity lost. It will then fail to encompass the universal laws by which all things develop.

As to "Doing nothing, there is nothing which it does not do," Guo Xiang comments, "Names stop at substances, and therefore do nothing. But each substance does everything to take careful of itself, and therefore there is nothing which it does not do" (Guo, 2004: 911). Where there is a name, there is its substance. Where there is no name, the substance is not available. The *Tao*, as the universal law governing everything, cannot itself be concrete like things, because if it were, it could not be that by which all things come to be. Therefore, the *Tao* can be felt in everything, and there is nothing it does not do, which is a reaffirmation of "The *Tao* in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do" (Zhu, 1984: 146).

4.3.2 Adjustment to Shi

As pointed out in our discussion of the metalanguages of the *Book of Changes* in the first chapter, the concept of *shi* (time) refers to the context in which a certain meaning is conveyed. Virtually no meaning can be transmitted without it involving spatial and temporal elements. The renowned American linguist Leonard Bloomfield remarked:

> By uttering a linguistic form, a speaker prompts his hearers to respond to a situation; this situation and the response to it, are the linguistic meaning of the form (Bloomfield, 1984: 165).

The same sentence uttered in a different context may invite a different interpretation. The meaning of a word is understood in a sentence, while the meaning of a sentence is grasped with reference to the context. These are now common linguistic concepts, but Zhuangzi's grasp of them in his time renders the master remarkable. Zhuangzi realizes the significance of contexts, highlighting that the use of anything must be adjusted to its time. Time refers to the context, and use denotes its meaning. Specifically, the relationship between signifying practices and their interpretations should be considered in certain contexts, which is reminiscent of a pragmatic understanding.[3]

The last few parts of "Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease" include two stories about usefulness and uselessness (Guo, 2004: 37). In the first, Huizi told Zhuangzi that the King of Wei sent him seeds from a large gourd, which he sowed. The fruit, when fully grown, was surprisingly large. He used it to contain water, but it was so heavy he could not lift it by himself. He cut it in two to make the parts into dippers, but they

[3] According to Charles Morris, the American semiotician, semiotics is composed of three parts, namely, syntactics, semantics and pragmatics. Of these, pragmatics is generally believed to be a study of the relations between signs and users, with its focus on signs in use. Its central idea is to understand the relations between signifiers and meanings with the specific people, time and place/space considered. Personally, the authors of the present book think that people could be understood as the agent, time the context and place the spatial background.

were so large and unwieldy he could not dip them into anything. Deciding that they were but large and useless things, Huizi knocked them to pieces. On hearing this, Zhuangzi commented, "You certainly are dense when it comes to using big things." To clarify his point, Zhuangzi told Huizi a story. There was a man from the State of Song who was skillful at making a salve that prevented the hands from chapping. For generations, his family had made a living by silk bleaching. A stranger heard of the salve and proposed to buy the art of the preparation for a hundred measures of silver. The kindred all came together and considered the proposal. They realized they had never made much money by bleaching, though they had been in the business for generations, and if they sold the salve-making method, they would be paid a hundred measures up-front. Thus, they agreed without hesitation. The stranger then took the salve with him when he gave counsel to the King of Wu, who was having trouble with the State of Yue. The King gave him the command of his fleet, and in the winter, he engaged with Yue inflicting a great defeat, and was awarded a portion of the conquered territory as his fief (Guo, 2004: 37).

Zhuangzi concluded, "The salve had the power to prevent chapped hands in either case, but one man used it to get a fief, while the other never got beyond silk bleaching, because they used it in different ways." When applied to different objects, the same thing with the same use will work differently. If "the salve had the power to prevent chapped hands" is compared to a "sentence," used in different "contexts"—silk bleaching in one case and equipping the fleet in the other—the interpretations cannot be the same.

The other story also concerns Huizi and Zhuangzi. Huizi told Zhuangzi that he had a strange tree, "Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square. You could stand it by the road, and no carpenter would look at it twice." Huizi concluded it was "big and useless," but Zhuangzi believed that was not the case. If planted in a large and barren wilderness, the tree with its numerous branches and leaves would be good enough to provide shade from the sun, so would it then still be useless? In addition, if regarded as useless, its life will not be shortened by axes: is that not an additional advantage? (Guo, 2004: 39).

This is another fable advising us that if people always judge themselves by the values of others and adjust themselves accordingly, they are likely to bring harm and danger to themselves, and happiness cannot be found. Socially, we tend to construct our own selves from the perspectives of others, bearing their value criteria in mind. This amounts to forsaking substances for names, which Zhuangzi regarded as extremely undesirable. He believed that one should adjust to one's own nature, to what is natural in oneself. Kun and Peng have their respective natures, which make them what they are (Guo, 2004: 2). A cicada and a little dove have their respective natures, which make them what they are (Guo, 2004: 9). The morning mushroom and short-lived cicada have theirs (Guo, 2004: 11). Judging our own nature through the eyes of others amounts to doing harm to it, which should be avoided.

Sadly, in the present world, people cannot wait to achieve fame and fortune. They are undoubtedly constructing their selves from the perspectives of others. Students study hard to bring glory to their families and ancestors, men marry beautiful women,

and many people become loyal consumers of luxurious products to gain admiration from those around them. The meanings gained have surely been derived from the views of others. Are the real needs of their inner selves ever considered? Have they ever thought about their inner selves?

This behavior goes against nature, and is therefore rejected by Zhuangzi, who believes there will be no happiness without adjusting to one's true self. How can we adjust to our true selves? To do so means making the best use of what is natural in us all. In the case of the Yak, large as it is, it does not know how to catch rats, (Guo, 2004: 39) but it should not be blamed because rat-catching is against its nature. If the yak instead carries something heavy, it may be said to have adjusted to its nature. Therefore, only when something is in the particular environment that fits well with its nature can it be said to have adjusted to its nature and can it demonstrate its usefulness to the full.

Even when the contexts are the same, the meaning may still vary. The acquisition of meaning is largely associated with the agents involved, namely the speaker and hearer. In his discussion on meaning, Geoffrey Leech explains:

> Meaning, in this sense, is something which is performed rather than something that exists in a static way. It involves action (the speaker producing an effect on the hearer) and interaction (the meaning being "negotiated" between the speaker and hearer on the basis of their mutual knowledge) (Leech, 1985: 320).

A fable from "The Adjustment of Controversies" well illustrates this point. Let them both sleep in a pond, it says, then a man and fish will be influenced differently: the man will suffer from diseases whereas the fish just enjoys being there. Let them both live in a tree, a man and a monkey will react differently: the man will be frightened and cannot help trembling whereas the monkey just enjoys being there (Guo, 2004: 93). What makes such a big difference in these three? The man, the monkey, and the fish each have their respective nature. When the agent is different, the interpretant will naturally not be the same.

Zhuangzi emphasizes that life should be properly preserved, and harm and danger be avoided. He also advocates being content with the time and willing to follow along. The concept of "time" is too important to be neglected. In the extant version of *Zhuangzi*, *Shi* "时," the Chinese character for time, appears one hundred times. In "The Turning of Heaven," it is written that "just so it is that the rules of propriety, righteousness, laws, and measures change according to the time" (Guo, 2004: 519). In addition, in "Robber Zhi," we find, "Look all round on every side of it, and as the time indicates, cease your endeavors" (Guo, 2004: 1006). Such examples are too numerous to be listed, indicating Zhuangzi's emphasis on the concept "time."

From a realistic perspective, adjustment to time is a way to avoid harm and danger. In "Correcting the Nature,"

> Those whom the ancients called "Retired Scholars" did not conceal their persons, and not allow themselves to be seen; they did not shut up their words, and refuse to give utterance to them; they did not hide away their knowledge, and refuse to bring it forth. The conditions laid on them by the times were very much awry. If the conditions of the times had allowed them to act in the world on a great scale, they would have brought back the state of unity

> without any trace being perceived (of how they did so). When those conditions shut them up entirely from such action, they struck their roots deeper (in themselves), were perfectly still, and waited. It was thus that they preserved (the Way in) their own persons (Guo, 2004: 555).

Humans are animals characterized by the use of signs. All signifying practices are without exception semiotized, as meaning falls into the realm of semiotics.

Like Laozi, Zhuangzi admires the *Tao* and despises rituals, as he believes that the man-made articulations made possible by the signs of music and rituals are responsible for many calamities in the human world. As claimed in "Correcting the Nature", "If ceremonies and music are carried out in an imperfect and one-sided manner, the world is thrown into confusion" (Guo, 2004: 548). The world was plunged into turmoil in which incessant fighting between the kings and lords made life impossible for the people. The so-called "scholars in hiding" of ancient times and hermit contemporaries of Zhuangzi are different because "the fates of the times" are not the same. According to Zhuangzi, people should in all signifying practices, if possible, "Rest in what the time requires, and manifest that submission" (Guo, 2004: 128, 260). This expression appears twice in *Zhuangzi*, once in "Nourishing the Lord of Life" and the other in "The Great and Most Honored Master."

"Nourishing the Lord of Life" tells a story about Qin Shi, a friend of Laozi, who came to offer condolences upon Laozi's death. After crying out three times, Qin Shi simply came out. Seeing what he did, the disciples were more puzzled than surprised. Qin Shi explained:

> When the Master came, it was at the proper time; when he went away, it was the simple sequence (of his coming). Quiet acquiescence in what happens at its proper time, and quietly submitting (to its ceasing) afford no occasion for grief or for joy. The ancients described (death) as the loosening of the cord on which God suspended (the life) (Guo, 2004: 128).

According to Qin Shi, both life and death have their respective proper times. When the time comes, one can only naturally follow the way it should be. We are born when it is the proper time for birth and die when it is the proper time for death. Once we understand that both life and death are part of nature, we will no longer be filled with hatred for them.

A shift in the context can help grasp a higher-level meaning. This approach is indeed inspiring. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to conclude that philosophically, adjustment to time is an ideal way for people to find a resting place for their souls and to pursue higher spiritual values.

4.3.3 A Debate About Word and Meaning

Traditionally, when Zhuangzi's ideas about signs are discussed, the focus is often on his thoughts regarding linguistic signs. Zhuangzi's ideas concerning word and meaning have long been among the key issues in traditional Chinese studies of signs.

Zhuangzi explores this field in depth and offers his insight. From a modern semiotic perspective, the main topics are as follows.

First, *Zhuangzi* is among the earliest books to note that in a given language, how the sign vehicle and the object signified are combined is a problem that needs addressing. According to Chapter 13 of *Zhuangzi* (Guo, 2004: 488–489), ordinary people's understanding of a language is only skin-deep, so much so that they are tempted to believe that words are sufficient to convey ideas. These people cherish words, without knowing that the meaning they are supposed to deliver is what makes words so valuable. In the present world, people tend to mistake language for what is valuable, forgetting that meaning is the ultimate aim. Zhuangzi advocates what is currently known as "signified superiority." A sign vehicle is simply a tool with which the object signified is to be captured. It is regrettable that sign vehicles, rather than the objects signified, have been warmly embraced.

Zhuangzi's idea is consistent with what other Taoists believe. Explained semiotically, the major task for human beings in understanding the world is to obtain the true meaning of the object signified by transcending the sign vehicle with the sign vehicle itself as a tool. This idea stems from the belief that sign vehicles are not sufficient to express what is conveyed in the signified and that they are clumsy tools. This is not without overstating the negative effects of the language system in expressing meanings.

Saussure believes language is a system consisting of two parts, namely the "signifier" (sign vehicle) and "signified." Language signs are able to transmit meanings as there is an effective link between the two:

> When we consider the sign in its totality, we have something that is positive in its own class. A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas, but the pairing of a certain number of acoustical signs with as many cuts made from the mass of thought engenders a system of values, and this system serves as the effective link between the phonic and psychological elements within each sign. Although both the signified and the signifier are purely differential and negative when considered separately, their combination is a positive fact. It is even the sole type of facts that language has, for maintaining the parallelism between the two classes of differences is the distinctive function of the linguistic institution (Saussure, 1959: 120–121).

Viewed positively, in a linguistic system, each sign vehicle has an object signified as its match, so the given language must be allowed to convey the desired meaning precisely, or in the words of Zhuangzi, "form and color, name and sound should be sufficient to give them the real nature of the *Tao*" (Guo, 2004: 488–489). Considered negatively, language is merely an array of signs through which records are kept of certain concepts. Things are always multifaceted and subject to change. As such, many views can be held about the same thing. It is common for there to be different names for the same thing. A similar view is offered in "Knowledge Rambling in the North", "These names are different, but the reality (sought in them) is the same" (Guo, 2004:750). Here, the "form and color, name and sound" used to denote things cannot always be perfectly matched with the corresponding concept. If so, "the form and color, name and sound are certainly not sufficient to convey its real nature." This means that people should no longer hold fast to these words. Therefore, Zhuangzi not

only denies the existence of any effective link between the sign vehicle and object signified but also goes so far as to claim that language is incapable of conveying any meaning at all.

The "The Way of Heaven" includes a story about the wheelwright Pian. Using himself as an example, the wheelwright points out that the knack of making wheels is to be understood and grasped and cannot be taught by word of mouth. The words in a language cannot convey the meaning effectively, which is why he is still making wheels in his old age instead of having his son do it. Similarly, the book Duke Huan reads is simply a carrier of the words of the ancients. These words fail to convey the thoughts of ancient sages, so the book amounts to nothing "but their dregs and sediments" (Guo, 2004: 490–491). With this fable, Zhuangzi aims to tell us that human thoughts cannot be transmitted effectively by words; essentially, the sign vehicles in a system of verbal signs cannot convey the conceptual meaning precisely. Here, it seems that the negative effects of a verbal sign system have been exaggerated by Zhuangzi, which is unacceptable.

Second, *Zhuangzi* registers the arbitrariness of signs. What links a sign with the particular meaning of a particular object? How do a sign and its meaning come together? Zhuangzi examines this issue and records his findings in the "The Adjustment of Controversies." For Zhuangzi, there is no certainty about whether something is right or wrong, or why things are like this instead of that. The path becomes what it is because many people have trod it. The thing is called by its name because that is the name constantly applied to it (Guo, 2004: 69–70). This is what is meant by arbitrariness, which serves to bind a sign and its meaning. As Saussure explains:

> The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: the linguistic sign is arbitrary (Saussure 1959: 67).

Saussure believes that social conventions have determined the link between the sign vehicle and the mental concept of the object signified, and it is therefore arbitrary and without motivation. The way a sign is connected with its meaning is arbitrary and therefore unjustifiable. The link between linguistic signs and the meanings they are supposed to convey is arbitrary, so it is theoretically sound that any concept can be expressed by any linguistic sign.

Again in "The Adjustment of Controversies,"

> By means of a finger (of my own) to illustrate that the finger (of another) is not a finger is not so good a plan as to illustrate that it is not so by means of what is (acknowledged to be) not a finger; and by means of (what I call) a horse to illustrate that (what another calls) a horse is not so, is not so good a plan as to illustrate that it is not a horse by means of what is (acknowledged to be) not a horse. (All things in) heaven and earth may be (dealt with as) a finger; (each of) their myriads may be (dealt with as) a horse (Guo, 2004: 66).

Being a finger or not being a finger, being a horse or not being a horse, these are relative and arbitrary expressions. Similarly, as the link between the sign vehicle and object signified in any system of linguistic signs is arbitrary, we can even refer to any concept between heaven and earth as a finger or call any of the myriad creatures a horse.

Third, the superiority of the object signified is also discussed in *Zhuangzi*. A signified object is what a sign vehicle is meant to denote in a system of signs. The function of a sign is the use of a sign vehicle to denote a signified object. The signified object is the ultimate goal of the entire process of signification. The superiority of the object signified can be detected in most signs concerning scientific reasoning, as well as those in daily use. Zhuangzi notices this phenomenon, and records it in "What Comes from without":

> Fishing-stakes are employed to catch fish, but when the fish are got, the men forget the stakes. Snares are employed to catch hares, but when the hares are got, men forget the snares. Words are employed to convey ideas, but when the ideas are apprehended, men forget the words (Guo, 2004: 944).

Fishing stakes and snares can be forgotten when fish and hares have been caught, so why cannot language as a tool, albeit special in that it is for the transmission of meaning, be forgotten when the meaning has been obtained? Any language is a sign system for the communication of thoughts and transmission of meanings; thus, the sign vehicle will have to retreat once the goal of communication is attained. According to Susanne Langer:

> What I mean is that a genuine symbol such as a word is only a sign. In appreciating its meaning, our interest reaches beyond it to the concept. The word is just an instrument. Its meaning lies elsewhere, and once we have grasped its connotation or identified something as its denotation we do not need the word anymore (Langer, 1957: 133).

In short, though the term "semiotics" does not appear in *Zhuangzi*, the dispute about the word and meaning it records is rich in sign-related thoughts, a fact well illustrated by the examples above. Further studies in this field will prove worthwhile.

4.3.4 Three Ways of Expressing

Since ancient times, Zhuangzi has been placed alongside Laozi in philosophical terms. With regard to literature, *Zhuangzi* is considered as successful as *Li Sao*.[4] Wen Yiduo (1899–1946), a famous Chinese poet and scholar, believes that the literary value of *Zhuangzi* has transcended language skills, making Zhuangzi's philosophy witty and vivid, unlike that of other philosophers. Wen comments that "his (Zhuangzi's) thought itself is a fascinating poem" (Wen, 2003: 78). *Zhuangzi* is, therefore, a masterpiece of both philosophy and literature. A historical study in either field cannot fail to mention Zhuangzi the great man and his great book. Zhuangzi is so admired because of the three ways he expresses himself. In *Zhuangzi*, "Metaphorical Language" is devoted to explaining his three ways of speaking:

[4] "Li Sao" or "Lament on Encountering sorrow," a Chinese poem dating from the Warring States period of ancient China. The early poetic tradition of China survives mainly through two anthologies, one being *Chuci* (Songs of Chu), the other *Shijing* (*Book of Songs*). The poem "Li Sao" is the lead poem and the main inspiration for the *Chuci* collection.

> Of my sentences, nine in ten are metaphorical (*yuyan* 寓言). Of my illustrations, seven in ten are from valued writers (*zhongyan* 重言). The rest of my words are like the water that daily fills the cup (*zhiyan* 卮言), tempered and harmonized by the Heavenly element in our nature. The nine sentences in ten that are metaphorical are borrowed from extraneous things to assist (the comprehension of) my argument. (When it is said, for instance), "A father does not act the part of matchmaker for his own son," (the meaning is that) "it is better for another man to praise the son than for his father to do so." The use of such metaphorical language is not my fault, but the fault of men (who would not otherwise readily understand me). Men assent to views that agree with their own, and oppose those that do not so agree. Those that agree with their own they hold to be right, and those that do not agree completely they hold to be wrong. The seven out of ten illustrations taken from valued writers are designed to end disputations. Those writers are the men of hoary eld, my predecessors in time. But such as are unversed in the warp and woof, the beginning and end of the subject, cannot be set down as of venerable eld and regarded as the predecessors of others. If men have not that in them that fits them to precede others, they are without the way proper to man, and they who are without the way proper to man can only be pronounced defunct monuments of antiquity. Words like the water that daily issues from the cup and are harmonized by the Heavenly Element (of our nature) may be carried on into the region of the unlimited and employed to the end of our years. But without words, there is an agreement (in principle). That agreement is not effected by words, and an agreement in words is not effected by it. Hence, it is said, "Let there be no words." Speech does not need words. One may speak all his life and not have spoken a (right) word; and one may not have spoken all his life, and yet all his life been giving utterance to the (right) words (Guo, 2004: 948–949).

This text is quoted in full length because it reveals how Zhuangzi makes himself understood in the book. As Ruan Minsong points out:

> The first few sentences of this chapter have revealed to us the writing skills that would otherwise have been implicit. Zhuangzi the literary genius on the whole impresses us with his unusual talent and the mighty power of his words, leaving readers too dazzled to find the secret to his writing. Only in Chapter 27 and Chapter 33 is the secret unveiled. There in these two chapters, the three ways in which Zhuangzi expresses himself (namely yuyan, zhongyan, and zhiyan) are examined in turn and explained in great detail. But sadly, most scholars remain in the dark and fail to see his point (Ruan, 1972: 445).

The above-quoted text from Zhuangzi is also important in that it offers an analysis of why he chose to express himself in this way, providing us with insights into the book that bears his name.

The so-called *yuyan*, as understood by Guo Xiang, depends on the words of others (Guo, 2004: 947). Cheng Xuanying goes a step further, explaining:

> *Yu* means to depend on or to borrow. Ordinary people in the world are usually unwise and tend to be suspicious. Once you tell them that this is your own belief, they are likely to distrust you. But if you tell them that you have heard such and such a thing from such and such a person, for nine times out of ten, they will believe in your saying. That's why Zhuangzi prefers to have Hongmeng, Yunjiang, Jianwu, Lianshu (these are the names of the characters in Zhuangzi the book) speaking with himself hidden in the background. This is what is known as *yuyan* (Guo, 2004: 947).

The use of *yuyan* means to borrow other people's words, which as Zhuangzi believes, can be more convincing and persuasive. For example, a father usually prefers not to be the matchmaker for his own son. Why? Being a father, no matter what he says about the son, he will not be trusted to be objective. Having an outsider

praise his son once is better than doing it himself a hundred times. After all, as an outsider, the other speaker is more likely to be neutral and trustworthy. Similarly, in our daily lives, when others hold the same view as ours, we tend to regard it as right and accept it. However, when their opinions differ from ours, we will be tempted to reject them as wrong. Incidentally, the *yuyan* mentioned here is different from the genre of *yuyan* we have today, which is the Chinese version of a fable. The former covers a wider scope than the latter. Admittedly, many fables are available in *Zhuangzi*, but the number of *yuyan* included is even larger.

Regarding 重言 (*zhongyan* or *chongyan*), we must first consider the pronunciation of the character 重, which in Chinese, can be read either as *chong* or *zhong*. When pronounced differently, the same character will vary in its meaning. The pronunciation *chong* is linked with repetition, therefore giving 重言 the meaning of repeating what others have said before, whereas the pronunciation *zhong* is associated with being important and respectable, thus allowing 重言 to refer to quotations from respectable and important figures. Despite scholars' disagreement on this issue, the authors of this book agree with the latter. Guo Xiang (252–312), the great commentator of *Zhuangzi*, believes that *zhongyan* refers to the words of the respectable ones in this world. Cheng Xuanying (608–669) shares this view, explaining that "*zhongyan* is what is respected in the community. Seven out of ten of what the respectable elders have said will be trustworthy and reliable" (ibid: 947). The adoption of *zhongyan* is to convince people with the words of respectable elders. The public tends to think that words from the ancients and celebrities outweigh those of others, and that they will be more influential and persuasive. Zhuangzi has these respectable figures speak for him, so his own view is better conveyed and accepted. Anecdotes may have been invented about these ancients and celebrities and dialogues created for them. Here, what matters in the process is that Zhuangzi's ideas are conveyed.

This writing strategy is well planned and effective. For example, take the anecdote between Confucius and his favorite disciple Yan Hui in "The Great and Most Honored Master." Zhuangzi aims to make understood his idea of sitting in forgetfulness (Guo, 2004: 284). Confucians have always been known to advocate rituals, music, benevolence, and righteousness, but in *Zhuangzi*, Confucius and Yan Hui are portrayed as characters who forget benevolence and righteousness, discarding rituals and music. Instead, sitting and forgetting everything has become a desirable goal for them. Even Confucius, noticing what Yan Hui has achieved in this aspect, volunteers to become Yan Hui's follower (Guo, 2004: 285). Confucian scholars have "accepted" the idea of Zhuangzi; thus, it follows that the value of that idea cannot be overestimated. Based on the analysis above, we conclude that *zhongyan*, as a way of speaking, usually depends on the words of the ancients and celebrities and therefore can be covered by the term *yuyan.*

Regarding *zhiyan*, some scholars have reportedly proven it to mean that "the author himself shows up in the book to state his views and preferences." There were no controversies or disputes in the objective world or in the principles of nature until human beings imposed their own subjective views on the external world and nature. As expounded in *Zhuangzi*:

> Here is that which makes a thing allowable, and that which makes a thing not allowable. There is that which makes a thing right, and that which makes a thing not right. How is a thing right? It is right because it is right. How is a thing wrong? It is wrong because it is wrong. How is a thing allowable? It is allowable because it is so. How is a thing not allowable? It is not allowable because it is not so (Guo, 2004: 949–950).

Every person has their own views and therefore their own reasons, which leads to their respective decisions as to what is so and what is not so, what is right and what is not right. This is where conflicts arise. However, for Zhuangzi, everything comes into existence and develops by following its own natural principles. There is nothing that is not something and is good for nothing, "Words like the water that daily issues from the cup and are harmonized by the Heavenly Element (of our nature)" (Guo, 2004: 949). Here, "that daily issues from the cup" means that adjustments are to be made according to changes in time and that it is advisable to be content with the time and follow along. "This is what is called the Lathe of Heaven; and the Lathe of Heaven is the Heavenly Element in our nature" (Guo, 2004: 950). Things are equal by nature. Man-made conflicting opinions are to be discarded, and things can last long only by following what is natural and adjusting to natural changes.

It is believed that *yuyan* accounts for ninety percent while *zhongyan* makes up for seventy percent of the total. If so, there will inevitably be some overlapping between the two.

> In *Zhuangzi, yuyan* and *zhongyan* are interrelated, sometimes overlapping, making a criss-cross network, where in yuyan, one will have no difficulty locating some examples of *zhongyan*, and vice versa. That's why the percentage of *yuyan* (ninety percent) does not undermine the validity of the percentage accounted for by *zhongyan* (seventy percent) (Zhang, 1993: 17).

As mentioned, viewed as a particular way of speaking, *zhongyan* can be classified as a subordinate term of *yuyan*. The hierarchical relations between the three terms—*yuyan*, *zhongyan*, and *zhiyan*—can be understood in two ways. For some, *yuyan* and *zhongyan* are both ways of expressing, whereas *zhiyan* refers to what is aimed at, namely, the content. For others, the sentence "*yuyan* accounts for ninety percent, while *zhongyan* makes up seventy percent of the total" does not profess to provide readers with exact information, and in this, the author does not mean to be concrete and specific. Some also believe that in *Zhuangzi*, the three terms form a trinity, but there is no agreement about whether this trinity should be called *yuyan* or *zhiyan*. Despite this disagreement, all three are ways of speaking (the form) with the purpose of conveying Zhuangzi's academic thought (the content). The following sketch may clarify the relationships from a semiotic perspective (Fig. 4.1).

In the discussion on Zhuangzi's thought concerning linguistic signs, it was mentioned that Zhuangzi is skeptical about the effective link between words and meaning and, therefore, does not believe that words are capable of transmitting meanings efficiently. He explains, "The *Tao* cannot be expressed in words; what can be expressed in words is not It" (Guo, 2004: 757). The question then is that if he believes that meaning cannot be effectively conveyed by words and that the *Tao* is beyond words, why has he chosen to convey his views in the three ways? The reason is explained by Zhuangzi himself in "What Comes from without":

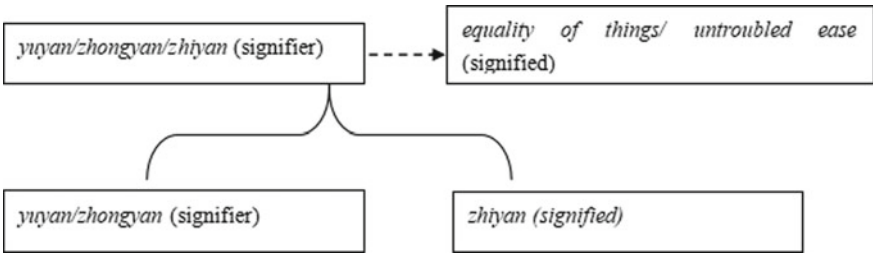

Fig. 4.1 Relationship between *Yuyan*, *Zhongyan,* and *Zhiyan*

> Fishing-stakes are employed to catch fish, but when the fish are got, the men forget the stakes. Snares are employed to catch hares, but when the hares are got, men forget the snares. Words are employed to convey ideas, but when the ideas are apprehended, men forget the words (Guo, 2004: 944).

These words remind readers of the sign-related thoughts embodied in "The Great Treatise I" of the *Book of Changes* (Lou, 1980: 609). The sages made their emblematic symbols to set forth fully their ideas, and the symbols can be discarded once their ideas are caught. In this respect, *Zhuangzi* resembles the *Book of Changes*. *The Book of Changes* creates emblematic symbols one after another, while *Zhuangzi* repeatedly adopts *yuyan*. Both do so lest readers be misled. The constant changes in emblematic symbols and seemingly endless variations of expression simply aim to broaden readers' horizons, preventing any lack of understanding.

As a later scholar[5] pointed out, according to the "Art of the Way" (*daoshu* 道术) handed down from ancient times, at the beginning of beginnings, it is blank, boundless, and without bodily form. After the ten thousand things are developed, it is transforming, changing, and never constant. Life and death alternate, like things coming and going, following the laws of nature. In a shadowy and subtle world, it is all-inclusive but has nowhere to rest. Zhuangzi delights in this, and it is an ideal opportunity for him to convey his profound philosophy in his characteristic strange and mystical expressions and wild and extravagant words. In fact, it is the efficient and effective use of these language skills and the adoption of *yuyan, zhongyan,* and *zhiyan*, as previously discussed, that enabled *Zhuangzi* to present a spectacular sight with mighty power. The scholar further comments:

> Though his writings may seem to be sparkling trifles, there is no harm in amusing one's self with them. Though his phraseology be ever-varying, its turns and changes are worth being looked at (Guo, 2004: 1099).

This illustrates not only that Zhuangzi aims high but also that the phraseology is worth appreciating. Its changing words and varying sentences, combined with the seemingly infinite interpretations of what is conveyed in the book, have attracted

[5] Cui Dahua claims to have proven that the Chapter "Tian Xia" was written by some later scholars and could be added to the other chapters of the book that bears the name of Zhuangzi. For more information concerning this view, please refer to Cui Dahua. *Zhuangxue yanjiu* 庄学研究. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1992, pp. 97–103.

numerous readers past and present to *Zhuangzi*. Appealing to these readers, apart from the profound philosophy, is its phraseology, the beauty of the language itself. In semiotic terms, when readers' attention is shifted to the text itself, the text acquires poeticalness. This is the case with *Zhuangzi*.

In *Semiotics of Literature*, Zhao Yiheng introduces two types of signs: those of strong coding and those of weak coding. The meaning of signs in the first category is the object signified, while the meaning of those in the second does not stop at the object signified. The latter signs have both denotations and connotations. In general, signs of strong coding are found in practical or scientific sign systems, while signs of weak coding are more likely in literary or artistic systems (Zhao, 1990: 34–35). If a sign points directly to the meaning without involving any room for interpretation, the text it is found in can often be categorized as reports or expositions. If, however, shifting or leeway for interpretation occurs between the sign vehicle and object signified, and if proper understanding can be attained only after great mental efforts, the text is almost certainly literary.

A poem, as a text of artistic signs, "once deprived the distance between the text and its meaning, will be considered shallow, banner-like, and no better than a slogan. Artistic understanding is like a suspended sentence: it seeks to recognize what can be perceived, and to interpret what has been recognized. The greater the effort involved in the process, the greater the pleasure and satisfaction gained. Even if the process ends up with no understanding at all, there is delight in doing it, as what matters here is not the result, but the process itself" (Zhao, 2011: 173).

The charm of artistic works may lie here. It is what distinguishes artistic from practical signs. *Zhuangzi* is embraced as a literary work because it falls into a sign system of weak coding. The literariness of *Zhuangzi* is best perceived from its special ways of expression, namely *yuyan*, *zhongyan*, and *zhiyan*, which provide the text with "a significant form" (Langer, 1953: 32) and contribute to the interpretative leeway in its meaning. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find that over the centuries, *Zhuangzi* has been favored by both writers and philosophers, while the works of Mozi, with its "explicit meaning and simple language" (Fan, 1958: 309), tends to be neglected by historians of literature.

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Chapter 5
Semiotic Thoughts of the School of Names and Mohist School

No discussion of traditional Chinese semiotic is complete without a mention of the School of Names and Mohist School. Compared with the Confucian School and Taoist School, the School of Names and Mohist School seem more "professional" in their semiotic thought. Philosophers of the latter two schools generally inquired into topics more directly related to modern semiotics, such as the relationship between *ming* 名 (name, terminology) and *shi* 实 (object, nature), or between *zhi* 指 (finger, reference) and *wu* 物 (things, objects). According to some researchers, scholars of the School of Names were "actually the semioticians of ancient China" (Li, 1995: 85). These two schools are discussed together because their academic philosophies were originally related. Lu Sheng, a scholar of the Jin Dynasty (266–316), pointed out in his *Annotation to the Mohist Canons* that "Mozi authored *The Mohist Canons* to explain the essence of names. Hui Shi and Gongsun Long followed him and distinguished themselves by rectifying names"(Fang, 1974: 3433). This statement indicates that the doctrine of the School of Names derives from that of the Mohist School, a view shared by later scholars such as Liang Qichao, Lü Simian, and Wu Feibai. For example, Liang Qichao (1999: 3299–3300) pointed out in *Studies of Mozi* that the learning of Hui Shi and Gongsun Long came from the Mohist School. Unfortunately, with the establishment of the Qin Empire (221 BCE) a long time ago, the doctrines of the School of Names and Mohist School were dropped from the official ideology. The situation worsened after the establishment of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE). Only in the Qing Dynasty (1636–1912) did they begin to regain their status in the academic world. Recently, the linguistic, logical, and semiotic thought embodied in the doctrines of the School of Names and Mohist School has been gradually revealed. Scholars have begun to understand that the semiotic thought of the School of Names and Mohist School constitutes a great treasure-trove of traditional Chinese semiotics, which should be further explored. Below, the characteristics of the semiotic thought of the School of Names and Mohist School are analyzed with reference to two theories proposed by these schools: the theory of *ming* and *shi*, and

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theory of *zhi* and *wu*. These theories are examined in light of related arguments by other Pre-Imperial philosophers.

5.1 Name and Nature: The Outset of Chinese Linguistic Semiotics

The distinction between name and object and that between word and idea are considered semiotic propositions with Chinese characteristics. In particular, most Pre-Imperial philosophers in China discussed the theory of name and object, such as Confucius and Xunzi of the Confucian School, Laozi and Zhuangzi of the Taoist School, Yang Zhu of the Yangist School, Shang Yang and Han Fei of the Legalist School, Yin Wen and Gongsun Long[1] of the School of Names, and Mozi of the Mohist School. Even *The Yellow Emperor's Four Canons,* a book written by Huang-Lao Taoists, addressed the question of name and object. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Hu Shi said that "each school has developed their thoughts on names" (2010: 134). This statement reveals the extent of the debate over names during the Spring and Autumn Period (770–475 BCE) and Warring States Period (475–221 BCE). These were periods of rapid social change during which while new objects were constantly appearing, existing names could not characterize them. Problems such as an inconsistency between name and nature were common in social and cultural life. This explains Confucius' lament that "a virtuous man is worried about failing to live up to his reputation until the end of his life" (Chen, 2014b: 49). The Pre-Imperial philosophers discussed name and nature from the perspectives of epistemology and logical semiotics, gradually deepening their understanding and promoting it as a subject of linguistic philosophy. These discussions were an important linguistic semiotic resource in early China. As the semiotic thought reflected by the theory of name and object in the field of politics and ethics is discussed in other chapters of this book (see Sects. 5.2.3 and 5.3.2), the following section is devoted to analyzing the Pre-Imperial literature (*Mozi*, *The Yellow Emperor's Four Canons*, *Guanzi*, *Yin Wenzi*, *Gongsun Longzi*, and *Xunzi*, among others) from a linguistic semiotics perspective.

[1] To avoid repetition and confusion, the present book distinguishes between Han Fei, the man, and *Han Feizi*, the book that purports to contain his writings. Likewise Gongsun Long is used to refer to the man, and *Gongsun Longzi* is meant for the book that bears his name. More such examples are Yin Wen and *Yin Wenzi*, Deng Xi and *Deng Xizi.*

5.1.1 *Relationship Between Name and Nature: The Name and Nature of the Object Are not Inherently Connected, but Defined by Conventions*

The relationship between name and nature was one of the central issues of linguistic semiotics in Pre-Imperial China. The Yangist School was among the first to approach it from a linguistic semiotics perspective. "What is real does not have a name, what has a name is not real. Names are nothing but false impositions" (Yang, 2013: 229). Although *Collected Annotations of Liezi* is generally believed to be a pseudograph written by the peoples of the Wei and Jin dynasties, it contains many doctrines of the Liezi School of the Pre-Imperial Period. Song Lian of the Ming Dynasty commented, "Yang Zhu 杨朱 focuses too much on the 'self.' It may be that the extant chapters of Yang Zhu's ancient writings are attached here" (1928: 15). Yang Zhu (approximately 395–335 BCE) was a thinker of the Warring States Period whose words and deeds can be found in many Pre-Imperial books such as *Mencius*, *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi*, *Han Feizi*, and *The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei*, as well as the Han texts *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *Model Sayings* 法言, *Collection of Discourses*说苑, and *Balanced Inquiries* 论衡. For example, according to *Mencius*, "The wise king does not appear, the princes behave unscrupulously, the hermits condemn the social abuses, and the ideological field is dominated by the ideas of Yang Zhu and Mozi. The dominant doctrines belong either to the Yangist School or Mohist school" (Chen, 2014c: 93). In addition, "Those who do not believe in the Mohist School will turn to the Yangist School, and those who do not believe in the Yangist School will turn to the Confucian School" (Chen, 2014c: 134). These quotes show that the Yangist School was as popular as the Mohist School at the time and among the distinguished schools of thought. Qian Mu (1895–1990), a modern Chinese historian, contended that "this is merely Mencius' speculation rather than a historical fact" (2011: 257). However, as Qian was a representative of neo-Confucianism, his viewpoint was likely not impartial. When Mencius travelled across the states, his preaching was rejected by the feudal princes as pedantic and impractical, indicating that the development of the Confucian School was hindered. Guo Moruo (1892–1978), a modern Chinese littérateur and historian, concluded that "it was an era when the doctrines of the Yangist School and Mohist School were dominant, while those of the Confucian School were paid the least attention to" (2012: 124). The fact that Yang Zhu and Mozi were considered dialecticians indicates that Yang Zhu knew a lot about the debate over name and object.

Based on Chapter 7 of *Collected Annotations of Liezi*, a dialogue between Yang Zhu and Qinzi, Mozi's disciple, Hu Shi speculated that Yang Zhu lived between 440 and 360 BCE (2010: 134), earlier than Mencius, Zhuangzi, and Gongsun Long. Yang Zhu was among the first to extend the discussion of name and nature from the field of political ethics to that of linguistic semiotics. (Indeed, although this chapter mainly discusses political ethics, its judgment and conclusion involve a linguistic semiotic perspective.) According to Yang Zhu, things are originally nameless, and the "name" of an object is not equal to the object itself. Thus, what is a name? Yang Zhu believed that names are "nothing but artificial impositions" (Yang, 2013: 229).

According to Xunzi, "What is gifted at birth is natural instinct … and what is achieved without conscious effort can be attributed to natural instinct … The mind thinking about something and the natural abilities acting on it is called 'artificial impositions'" (Wang, 1988: 412). In other words, "artificial impositions" are acquired, not inherent. Yang Zhu believed that "names" are artificial language signs used to characterize the nature of "objects" and that these signs can be learned. However, the name itself is not equal to the nature of the object. Therefore, Yang Zhu proposed that "the name is not derived from the nature of the object" (Yang, 2013: 244), "nor is the nature of the object given by the name" (Yang, 2013: 245). This differentiates the "name" of an object from the "nature of the object." According to the primitives, the name of an object is equal to its nature, proof of which can be found in anthropology. For example, in uncivilized nations, it was believed that the name of an object and the object itself were inherently related. The primitives in China also equated names with objects. Therefore, the aforementioned distinction is a step forward. Based on Peirce's trichotomy of signs, the thing is the object, its name serves as the representamen, and its interpretant is the political and ethical issues of the time.

With the development of knowledge and logic, Pre-Imperial scholars deepened their understanding of the relationship between name and nature. Gongsun Long defined a *name* as "a means by which an object is addressed" (Wang, 1957: 81). In other words, by addressing an object by its name, the object and name are linked. Pang Pu, a famous historian of philosophy in contemporary China, argued that "the name is subjective while the nature of the object is objective. By addressing the latter with the former, the subjective and the objective are connected" (2010: 89). An insightful discussion of this topic is also found in *Zhuangzi*. Yao, a legendary monarch in ancient China, was about to abdicate and hand over the crown to Xu You, a man of great virtue. His offer, however, was rejected by Xu, who argued that "a name is but the explicit form [literally *guest*] of the nature of an object. How shall I bow to a name?" Similarly, Cheng Xuanying, a Taoist priest of the Tang Dynasty, explained, "A name originates from the nature of an object. The latter is implicit, the dominant, while the former is explicit, the dominated. An anchorite will never sacrifice the latter for the former" (Guo, 2004: 25). According to Zhuangzi, a name is the dominated, the explicit, whereas the nature of an object is the dominator, the implicit. To sacrifice the latter for the former is to ignore the distinction between the two, which is wrong. Thus, Xu You was justified in his choice.

Xunzi clearly stated that "the name of an object and the nature of the object itself are not inherently related. Relations are established by conventions" (Wang, 1988: 420). That is, names and natures are not necessarily associated. Instead, the name used to designate an object is determined by conventions. Wang Ning suggested that "the theory of 'conventions' tells us accurately that 'sound and meaning are associated with each other by conventions'" (1996: 47). This association is contingent. Thus, names that conform to the conventions are appropriate. Yang Jing of the Tang Dynasty also suggests that "appropriate names such as 日 (*ri,* sun), 月 (*yue,* moon), 天 (*tian,* heaven) and 地 (*di,* earth) are without exception regulated by conventions" (Wang, 1988: 420). Names are established by conventions and gradually create a system of their own. During the process, the "conventions" matter most. Liang Qixiong

added that "conventions" highlight the "social factors that help lay the foundation for the establishment of names" (1983: 315). Names are not established by a single individual. Although Xunzi argued that names were determined by wise kings, these names could not become common linguistic signs without first being regulated by conventions. After all, languages are essentially established by conventions.

However, once a name is established and becomes a linguistic sign, social conventions must be observed when using this name. "Names have no intrinsic appropriateness. They are bound to something by an agreement to name it. Once this agreement is established, the custom is created and accepted as 'appropriate.' A name other than the one agreed upon is then considered 'inappropriate'" (Wang, 1988: 420). Quoting Liu Shipei, Liang Qixiong writes: "The word 'convention' should be interpreted as 'demarcation,' which means that a meaning is given to a particular object when a name is available to mark its boundaries. When it has been fixed by conventions, its boundaries will be clearly marked. What is different from the conventions is in violation of the demarcation" (Liang, 1983: 315). A name itself is neither appropriate nor inappropriate. Whether an object is correctly defined depends on whether the name is aligned with conventions. As long as it is, the object will be named. Members of the community are encouraged to adopt the established definition and respect the conventions. Otherwise, it will cause problems. This point is illustrated by an example in *Yin Wenzi*:

> An old man in a village named his eldest son "Thief" and his youngest son "Hit." One day, when his eldest son went out, he ran after him, shouting "Thief! Thief!" This happened to be heard by an official passing by. The official mistook the eldest son for a thief and caught him, shouting "Hit! Hit!" The old man meant to ask his youngest son to go and explain the situation to the official. Hearing this, the official thought that the old man was urging him to beat the thief. Thus, he began to hit him, so much so that Thief nearly died (Wang, 1957: 37).

It is generally accepted that a person who steals is a *thief* and that *hit* means *beat up*. Both are established names. By naming his sons "Thief" and "Hit," the old man violated conventions. Here, the inconsistency between name and nature caused the misfortune of his eldest son. Although the meanings of these two words were well defined by social conventions, the old man insisted on naming his two sons "Thief" and "Hit." Therefore, it is unsurprising that he was misunderstood by the official, who thought the old man was urging him to "catch the thief" and "beat him to death." In general, any means considered acceptable by a given society is a judgment made based on collective habits or conventions. Xunzi explained, "Those in violation of the conventions are considered to be not correct" (Wang, 1988: 420). If a name violates collective habits, it will be considered inappropriate. In this case, the name was clearly inappropriate as it violated conventions and nearly caused the death of the young man. After all, the sound and meaning of a language sign are defined by social conventions. Therefore, it will not be interpreted differently simply because of its accidental use by a single individual. In this sense, although signs are arbitrary, they remain unchanged in the social groups in which they are used, which guarantees the stability of a sign system.

Fig. 5.1 Corresponding image and text of the name 虎 ["tiger"]

Indeed, Xunzi's theory of "conventions" means that the name of an object is defined by social conventions and not necessarily related to the object itself. This fits well with the conventionality of language advocated by Ferdinand de Saussure. "Language conventions are not the product of human decisions. Once established, they are difficult to adjust or change. Individual language users are not capable of changing them, nor are language groups capable of shaking their authority" (Zhang, 2004: 109). However, Xunzi's idea that "the name of an object and the nature of the object are not inherently related" differs from Saussure's concept of the arbitrariness of linguistic signs. By arbitrariness, Saussure meant that the signifier and signified of a linguistic sign are arbitrarily combined. In other words, linguistic signs are arbitrary. Concepts and sounds are linked together by linguistic signs, which have nothing to do with objects and names. In Chinese, 名 (*ming*, name) is the combination of 文 (*wen*, image/text), the signified, and 声 (*sheng*, sound), the signifier. For example, 虎 (*hu*, tiger) is pronounced *hǔ* in Chinese, with the corresponding image and text illustrated Fig. 5.1.

The Chinese character 虎 (*hu,* tiger), the signified, is the abstract and simplified form of the "image" of the tiger, which is undeniably related to the tiger, a real animal in the real world. The sound *hǔ* recalls the concept of "tiger." This association is arbitrary. However, the name of the tiger is the combination of the image and sound, which is understandably related to the tiger. *The Yellow Emperor's Four Canons* suggests that "form and name produce sounds. These sounds should be identical to reality" (Chen, 2007: 188). The form and name constitute the conceptual sign, which characterizes an object. When the relationship between name and object is studied from a semiotic perspective, one must keep in mind that the name and conceptual sign must be consistent. This discussion leads to the next topic: the principle of naming.

5.1.2 The Principle of Naming: An Image Denoted by a Name, the Name Determined by the Image

As mentioned, the Chinese concept of 名 [name] is the combination of sound and image, and names and things are usually related through "images." This principle of naming was favored by the pioneering philosophers of ancient China.

Yin Wenzi begins with the following statement, "The *Tao* has no specific form, whereas every object that has a specific form has a specific name. A name is intended

to denote a form, and a form cannot be denoted without a name. Thus, no mistake should be made on names" (Wang, 1957: 22). "The *Tao* has no specific form" can be explained as follows: the *Tao* is characterized by constancy. Thus, it is inexpressible. Once expressed in signs, it will no longer be constant because semiotization is essentially a process of partialization. "Every object that has a specific form has a specific name" means that everything that has a specific form will evolve into a specific object with a specific name. According to the *Book of Changes*, "what has a specific form is called a utensil" (Chen, 2014e: 199). Gao Heng's commentary indicates that "utensil and object are the same thing, as an object refers to everything that has a specific form" (1998: 430). Zhuangzi stated that "what can be seen, heard, touched, and perceived is called an object" (Guo, 2004: 634). Gongsun Long also proposed that "heaven, earth, and what comes therefrom are called objects" (Wang, 1957: 79). Tan Jiefu believed that "the reason why heaven and earth are called objects is that they both have specific forms, and what originates therefrom is called an object for the same reason" (1963: 57). Therefore, unlike the *Tao*, all objects have their own names. A name (referring to Chinese characters, which are pictographs) serves to characterize the form of an object, that is, the "image," as mentioned above. "These characters are images in the sense that they are either self-explanatory or pictographic" (Duan, 2006: 425). Whether an object can be properly characterized depends on whether its form can be properly conveyed by its "name." "A name serves to characterize the form of an object, and the form of the object must be consistent with its name" (Wang, 1957: 23). Wang Bi (226–249) also highlighted that "the name of any object is derived from its form" (Lou, 1980: 199). Names such as 日 (*ri,* sun), 月 (*yue,* moon), 山 (*shan,* mountain), and 川 (*chuan,* river) are determined by their forms. A name is used to characterize the form, so the two must be consistent. "Therefore, consistency is required of the relationship between form and name" (Wang, 1957: 23). This idea was also emphasized by other schools in Pre-Imperial China.

According to *Guanzi*, "Each object has its inherent form, and a name serves to denote the form. He who achieves consistency in naming can be considered a wise man" (物固有形, 形固有名, 名当谓之圣人, Li, 2004: 764). Chen Guying suggested that "the text is corrupt so the character 形 (*xing*, form) is missing in the latter part" (2006: 155). Hence, the latter part of the sentence should be reinterpreted as "he who achieves consistency between form and name can be called a wise man." A further explanation of this paragraph is available in the same article.

> "物固有形, 形固有名,"此言名不得过实, 实不得延名。姑形以形, 以形务名, 督言正名, 故曰圣人。
>
> "Every object has its inherent form, and a name serves to denote such a form," indicates that names should not go beyond the nature of the objects, or vice versa. Forms are to be described objectively. The name of an object is determined by its form. He is a wise man who respects the naming principle and maintains consistency between the two (Li, 2004: 771).

This clearly indicates that a name must not exceed the object, and vice versa. As summarized by Guo Moruo, "The name of an object and the nature of the object must be consistent" (1984: 424). This was the guiding principle for proponents of the

rectification of names during the Warring States Period. Zhang Shunhui suggested that 形以形 are redundant characters and should therefore be deleted (2005: 244). Only in this way can what follows make sense. As mentioned, a name is the combination of form and sound. The name is determined by its form in combination with the language concerned.

"The art of the mind," "Purifying the mind," and other chapters in *Guanzi* are generally accepted as the works of the Jixia Branch of the Taoist School (Chen, 2006: 41). They focused on the relationship between form and name not for linguistic and logical reasons, but for the reconstruction of the social order. However, some topics are closely related to linguistic semiotics. Regarding the principle of naming, the Jixia Branch suggested that the "object" is the root and should be prioritized, while the name is used to denote it. "Efforts should be made to trace things back to their beginning and investigate their nature to know how they came into being. By observing their appearance, their forms can be grasped. By analyzing their inner structures, they can be better understood for what they are. By examining their beginnings, their names can be known" (Li, 2004: 788). By seeking the origin of an object and discussing its essence, one may know how it became what it is. By examining its appearance, its form can be understood. By knowing both, its name will no longer be a mystery. According to Chen Guying, the logical principle is "to know the form of an object by observing its appearance and to give it an appropriate name by exploring its origin" (2006: 192). In other words, the establishment of the name of an object is based on its form, a principle also illustrated in other works of the Huang-Lao Taoist School. For example, in *The Yellow Emperor's Four Canons*, it was said that "when a thing is about to come into being, its form arrives before its name. The name is determined by the form" (Chen, 2007: 345). The "thing" here is no longer an objective physical entity, but a subjective one because of the involvement of human intentionality. In other words, when the subject and object are intentionally associated, the object has not only a specific form but also a certain meaning. Discussing Gongsun Long's argument that "the denotation of a concept is to address an object without going beyond its limits," Tan Jiefu notes that "an object is denoted by an image with its specific form and color" (1963: 57). An object is the combination of specific features such as form and color, properties that can be perceived and recognized. Zhao Yiheng suggests:

> An object is an entity that can be transformed into a sign by perception. By such transformation, the object and the sign, two ends of the same entity, are integrated into one. The difference between the two is that the supply of sensory data can be incessant, which enables people to have an in-depth understanding through their consciousness, while the sign provides the effort of interpretation through perception. A deeper understanding cannot be achieved without "the aid of other signs." (2015: 18–26)

An "entity" becomes an object of cognition because of the involvement of human intentionality. As its "name" or concept is not yet defined, human beings can perceive its appearance such as the appearance of a tiger or horse. Through appearance, one can better understand the form and thereby differentiate one object from another. Through this understanding and differentiation, the name can be defined; hence, "the

name of an object is determined by its form" (Wang, 1957: 22). Thus, the name *tiger* or *horse* is defined, and a related conceptual pedigree can be established.

The name of an object is determined by its form. Thus, what is conveyed by the form comes first, and the name used to denote it comes second. In general, "All things, great and small, exist where they are. All that happens, be it gains and losses, life and death, is determined by their inherent properties" (Chen, 2007: 25). All objects exist in a certain time and space. Their fate is determined by their nature and their name can be defined by their nature and form. This was concisely expressed by the Mohist School, "To denote something is to refer to it by its name" (Kong, 2001: 415). "A name or concept is a reflection of the inner properties of an object in the human mind. That's why it can be used to denote objects in the real world" (Chen, 2016a, 2016b: 324). To support his view, Chen quoted Mozi, claiming that to name something is like drawing a tiger in the sense that 虎, the written form of tiger in Chinese, looks like a tiger (Kong, 2004: 338). By comparing different objects (e.g., horses), we know more about the tiger as an animal and use the name 虎 to denote it. The resemblance between the name and tiger itself demonstrates their inherent relationship. Here are some quotes from Mozi, "Denoting means imitating an object" (Kong, 2001: 315), "to denote an object is to inform people of its name so that its nature can be well understood" (Kong, 2001: 337), and "describe the myriad things as what they are" (Kong, 2001: 415). These statements, although taken from different chapters, propose the same thing. The three key words here, namely "denote," "describe," and "name," are attempts to represent the object. Their main difference is that the first two emphasize the process, while the last underlines the result. In this sense, names/characters were originally either pictographs or intended to symbolize logical or abstract terms.

Once the name of an object has been established by conventions, it cannot be changed at will. The requirement that "the name of an object and the object should be consistent" must always be fulfilled (Kong, 2001: 351). A more detailed explanation was given in *Gongsun Longzi*:

> Heaven and earth and what originates therefrom are all objects. The extension of a concept consists in addressing an object without going beyond its limits. The connotation of a concept is to stipulate which object is characterized by it with the nature of the object, so that the object can be adequately characterized. If the connotation of a concept is inadequate, the concept is not correctly stipulated. Otherwise, it is. Correct the incorrect concepts with the correct ones, rather than challenging the accuracy with the inaccuracy of incorrect concepts. A concept that is correct must correctly reflect the nature of the object, and to correctly reflect the nature of an object, a correct concept is desired. A correct concept must correspond to what it denotes (Dong, 2014: 678).

Gongsun Long first distinguished between ming (名 name), shi (实 nature), and wu (物 object). According to him, an object can be any physical entity in the world, which because of the involvement of intentionality, has an established name. Take the example of oxen and horses. These two animal species are called oxen and horses because of the differences in their "nature." Thus, what constitutes the "nature" of an object? Wang Guan argued that "it refers to the inherent properties of an object" (1992: 88). Dong Yingzhe proposed that "it refers to the specific attributes of an

object, things characterized by the 'name' of the object and constituting the objective basis of the connotation of the concept" (2014: 679). This shows that shi is different from wu in that wu is the generalization of concrete things with forms and colors, while shi is the abstraction of some common attributes of such entities. Names serve not only to characterize the former, but also to denote the latter. From the perspective of the ancient theory of form and name, the relationship between name, nature, and object is illustrated in Fig. 5.2. From the perspective of semiotics, the name is the conceptual sign of an object, and their relationship is shown in Fig. 5.3.

The "nature" of an object has limits. A name that falls within these limits is appropriate. Otherwise, it is not. Therefore, the name of an object must be adjusted and rectified according to the nature of the object. In other words, whether the name

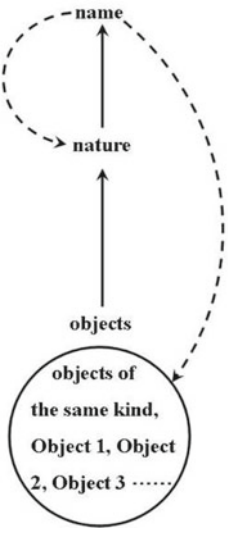

Fig. 5.2 Relationship between name, nature, and object from the perspective of the ancient theory of form and name

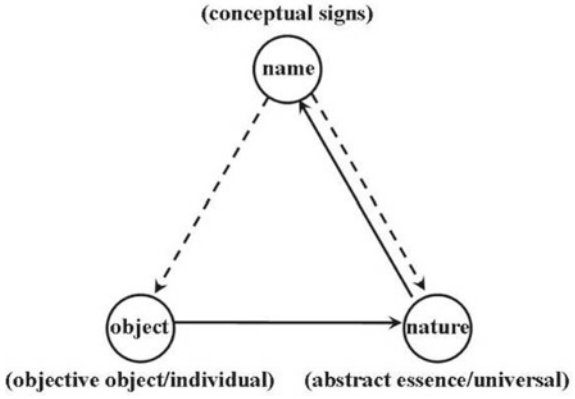

Fig. 5.3 Relationship between name, nature, and object from the perspective of semiotics

of an object is appropriate depends on whether it correctly reflects the "nature" of the object. Once the names are rectified, different objects will not be confused. This summary marks the end of our discussion of the relationship between name and nature in the Pre-Imperial period.

5.1.3 *The Function of Names: To Differentiate One Object from Another*

Pioneering scholars such as Confucius, Laozi, and Han Fei mainly discussed the function of names from an ethical and a political perspective. With the development of the study of names, Pre-Imperial philosophers gradually deepened their understanding of linguistic signs and ideology and of the function of names. Below is a review of the discussion of the function of names in the works of the Taoist School, *Xunzi*, and other books from a linguistic semiotics perspective.

According to the literature, as early as the Spring and Autumn Period, Deng Xi discussed the function of names, advocating making forms (actions/practices) comply with names (*xun ming ze shi* 循名责实, Wang, 1957: 5). The chapter entitled "No Discrimination" proposed that "it has long been difficult to differentiate one object from another and to distinguish between right and wrong, white and black, and pure and turbid" (Wang, 1957: 6). The differentiation of one object from another and distinction between right and wrong and black and white are related to the function of names. Therefore, Deng Xi advocated studying "the phenomena in which an object is presented to grasp its form, to understand the how and why of the object and to use them as a basis for rectifying its name" (Wang, 1957: 8). This enabled the differentiation of one object from another and distinction between white and black. Although Deng Xi's conclusion that "when the wise king holds the Way in his hand, the myriad things will naturally find their proper places" (Wang, 1957: 6) referred to political status and social governance, the implied speculation about the function of names from a linguistic semiotics perspective cannot be denied.

The function of names is further explored in Huang-Lao Taoist works such as *The Yellow Emperor's Four Canons*, non-extant literature, and *Yin Wenzi*, which although classified as a work of the School of Names, involves Taoist ideology (Chen, 2007: 23). Huang-Lao Taoists approached the formation and significance of form and name from a Taoist ontology: 虛无有, 秋毫成之, 必有形名, 形名立, 则黑白之分已 (Only if one remains in a state of formlessness and calmness of mind may he know that all things, however small, have their forms and names as soon as they come into existence. Once the forms and names are fixed, black and white will no longer be confused, Chen, 2007: 10). In my opinion, 虛无有 should be read as 虛无, 有. Basically, this sentence means the same as Laozi's claim that "all things in the world come from *It* as existing (and named); that existence comes from *It* as non-existent (and not named)" (Zhu, 1984: 165), the view of the cosmogony of the Taoist School. *Existing* refers to "objective existence." An object that exists has

certain forms. By studying these forms, its name is known; by knowing that, the distinction between different objects is possible. "As soon as their names and forms are fixed, things will correct themselves" (Chen, 2007: 25). This was also discussed by Yin Wen, "Names are intended to distinguish this from that and to test the truth of things. Since ancient times, it has always been that correct names bring gains while incorrect ones lead to losses. The losses are due to mixed names and fuzzy boundaries, while the gains are due to clear names and boundaries" (Wang, 1957: 23). Wang Qixiang also claimed that "to differentiate one object from another" echoes "to denote an object," and that the sentence should be interpreted as, "A name serves to differentiate one object from another and to characterize an object" (1957: 23). Names have fulfilled certain functions since ancient times. If a name is correctly defined, it will be possible to differentiate one object from another. Otherwise, it will not. Although Yin Wen discussed names in reference to rights and duties, his contribution to the study of names in linguistic semiotics is undeniable, "Now that the myriad things are here with us, the world will be left in confusion if things are not regulated properly with names. Now that there are ten thousand names here with us, they will be incorrect if found to be inconsistent with the forms of the objects they denote" (Wang, 1957: 23). The difference of "name" distinguishes one object from another. Without names, confusion will be inevitable. Accordingly, *ming* is the abstraction of the form and color of an object. If the name and form of the object are inconsistent, disharmony will be inevitable.

When a name is defined, "it serves to regulate the object, which in turn, can be used to examine whether the name is appropriate. With this in mind, the law of an object has nowhere to hide, as it can be studied according to its name and form" (Wang, 1957: 22). In other words, "one must examine the three names before managing the myriad things" (Chen, 2007: 134–135), the basic criterion for dealing with all objects to examine the relationship between their names and nature, or the "three names" as they are sometimes called: correct names, false names, and namelessness. "First, correct names, which leads to correct positions and a peaceful government; second, false names, names that do not correspond to reality and may result in chaos and disturbance; third, namelessness, a situation in which the ruler pays no attention to reality so that his country, however strong it is, is doomed to failure" (Chen, 2007: 138). In other words, correct names show consistency between name and nature, false names demonstrate an inconsistency between them, and namelessness warns us of the absence of established forms and names. These three names are important to both linguistic semiotics and political ethics. As commented in *Guanzi*, "If the name and nature are consistent, society can be well governed. Otherwise, it cannot. And if no name is defined, nothing will be achieved except chaos. That's why the old kings valued names" (Li, 2004: 252). The old kings cherished names because names have certain functions that people need. The logic is as follows, "When consistency is achieved between name and nature, all things can be distinguished accordingly and no confusion will be brought about. Such being the case, one has learnt the Way to be a True King" (Chen, 2007: 135). From a linguistic semiotics perspective, 名实相应则定, 名实不相应则静. (If the name of an object is consistent with its nature, then the state will be in order. Otherwise, it will be silent, Chen, 2007: 141) Both

Mawangdui Silk Texts (Institute of Ancient Documents of National Cultural Heritage Administration 1980: 54) and *Modern Annotation on The Yellow Emperor's Four Canons* (Chen, 2007: 144) maintained that the correct character here should be 爭 (*zheng*, dispute), not 靜 (*jing*, silence). Hence, the question above should tell us that when the name and nature do not match, conflicts and disputes are inevitable. Only by examining whether the name of an object is consistent with its nature can we know whether the object is correctly denoted. "If the three names have been closely examined, things are likely to be properly managed." With things properly managed, "one has learned the Way to be a True King" (Chen, 2007: 138).

However, why are "names" needed? Meditating on the question, Xunzi of the Confucian School found that "the reasons for the emergence of names and their differences were essential to the establishment of names by the wise kings and should thus be studied" (Wang, 1988: 415). Xunzi partially answered the question, claiming that "by applying names to the myriad objects, people followed the established conventions of the Central Plain states. People from distant regions with different customs could rely on standard terminology to better communicate with others" (Wang, 1988: 411–412). In other words, the key to effective communication lies in established names. People from places with different customs can turn to standard terminology for help. "Therefore, a True King creates names in the following way. As fixed names keep objects distinct and because by using this way his goals are understood, he strives to produce uniformity [with regard to names and his Way] among the people" (Wang, 1988: 414). The monarch creates names for different objects. Once the name of an object is defined, one object can be differentiated from another. For example, by defining and establishing names such as horses and oxen, communication is facilitated, meaning a horse cannot be mistaken for an ox. Confucius argued that names should be rectified by rites. For him, objects must be regulated by established names. Noting the development and change of the world, Xunzi admitted that as new objects appear, the established names may fail to denote the connotation of these new things. Therefore, new names must be defined according to the nature of these objects, "Should a True King appear, he would certainly retain some old names, but would also have to invent new ones" (Wang, 1988: 414). This ensures that the name of an object can be consistent with its nature. Xunzi further pointed out:

> With regard to different bodies, alienated minds influence the relative factors in the terms we use to illustrate our meaning, and with regard to different things, the connection between the name and the object is obscure. That being so, no distinction can be made between the noble and the humble, or between the identical and the different. Such being the case, problems will arise: people are not likely to understand each other, and things are likely to be confusing and may have to be abandoned. This is why wise men make "distinctions" and "separations." They establish names for objects, making distinctions to clarify what is noble and what is humble, and separations to distinguish between things that are the same and those that are different. Once the noble is distinguished from the humble and the same from the different, communication between different thoughts will no longer be hindered, things will not be hampered. This is why names are created (Wang, 1988: 415).

This is an analysis of the origin of "names" and a comprehensive account of their function. The forms of different objects differ, just like human thinking. However, a

"name" can be used to denote an object to avoid confusion. Because of the different views of an "object," the views on its "nature" tend to be different. Thus, "there will be inconsistency between name and nature" (Wang, 1988: 415). Then, the differentiation of one object from another will be impossible, as will the social hierarchy. In this case, smooth communication will be impossible, and people may find themselves at a loss for words and deeds. After all, as explained by Yang Jing of the Tang Dynasty, "Without names, chaos will be brought about. That's why names were instituted by wise men. Names are used to denote objects and must therefore correspond to reality" (Wang, 1988: 415). With names, the humble is distinguished from the noble and the same is distinguished from the different. Concerns and dangers can be removed from thoughts and actions. "Once the names are heard, what is conveyed is well understood. This is exactly what names are for" (Wang, 1988: 422). Clarifying the social hierarchy and differentiating one object from another are two functions of names. Therefore, how do names fulfill their functions? Xunzi provides the following analysis.

Xunzi said that 名也者, 所以期累实也 (A name is meant to accumulate objects, Wang, 1988: 423). Yang Jing argued that the correct characters here should be 异实, not累实, indicating that names differentiate one object from another, (Wang, 1988: 423) which I believe is tenable. Additional proof is found in the text. The preceding line states that 累而成文,名之丽也 [The link between names consists of compositions formed by stringing words together], Wang, 1988: 422–423). The correct word to use should also be 异, not累, as explained in *Interpretation of Names*, "Names are numerous because the colors of the objects they denote are numerous, so are the written forms of these objects" (Liu, 2008: 109). If there were only one color and one written form, they could not be described as "numerous." Therefore, "names are numerous," just as different objects are named differently. The following line proposed that 辞也者, 兼异实之名以论一意也。辨说也者, 不异实名以喻动静之道也 (Propositions connect the names of different realities to express a single idea. By not allowing objects to be separated from their names, dialectics and explanations illustrate the Way of action and rest). In this case, 异 is also used, "Propositions are used to communicate one's idea" (Kong, 2001: 415). For example, we say that "a tiger is a felid." The word "tiger" alone is insufficient to express this meaning. If all objects were defined by a single name (e.g., "tiger"), their respective meanings would not be well communicated. Yang Liuqiao proposed using the word 分 (*fen*, discrimination) to replace 不 (*bu*, not) in 不异实名 (not allowing objects to be separated from their names) to be consistent with the preceding part (2009: 449), which I think is advisable. As such, in dialectics and explanations, it is necessary to distinguish between names to find reasons to support one's judgment. By understanding this, we can go back to the idea that a name serves to characterize the nature of an object. As the nature of different objects differs, their names cannot be the same. Contrasts and differences between names make them meaningful when combined with other names. Tu Youxiang explained, "A sign is meaningful and valuable when it is different from other signs in sound. This means that the meaning and value of a sign are to be understood in relation to other signs and are therefore subject to change" (2011a: 91). More accurately, the differences between "names" in Chinese lie in their form and sound. Once the name of an object has been established by

conventions, its "nature" can be learnt indirectly through its name. Moreover, an infinite world of meaning can be constructed by combining different "names."

The study of names is considered a semiotic system with Chinese characteristics. In Pre-Imperial China, it covered among other things such fields as *zhengminglun* 正名论 (theory of the rectification of names), *xingminglun* 形[刑]名论 (theory of form/punishment and name), and *mingshilun* 名实论 (theory of name and nature). In my opinion, the first is more about political ethics, the third about linguistic semiotics, and the second is somewhere in between. The topic of *xingming* 形名 (form and name) falls within the scope of linguistic semiotics, while that of *xingming* 刑名 (punishment and name) falls within the scope of politics and the rule of law. Although 形 (form) and 刑 (punishment) referred to the same thing and were used interchangeably in Pre-Imperial China, they can be differentiated according to their application and theoretical basis. Based on the evolution of human civilization, the primitives did not distinguish between name and nature. With the development of human recognition, names were not as mysterious as before. However, they still played a key role in the field of political ethics, leading to Confucius' claim that "names should be rectified" (Chen, 2014: 42). Since the Warring States Period, the controversy over names among scholars has gradually intensified, but their understanding of this topic has also deepened. For instance, some scholars have argued that the relationship between name and nature should be regulated by social conventions. It has been suggested that names should be based on forms and used to denote forms. These scholars have also emphasized that names serve to examine all objects and differentiate one object from another. To varying degrees, the topic of semiotic philosophy is broached in the debate about the relationship between *ming* 名, *wu*物, and *shi*实. Zhao Yiheng noted that Yi-ology, the study of names, Mohist theory, Five Element theory, divination, Zen studies, and the learning of the heart and mind all "focus on the fundamental issue of meaning generation, which is possible when consciousness is confronted with the world." (2017a: 1–9) These fields of study constitute a Chinese tradition of semiotic philosophy, or semiotics with Chinese characteristics, in which the theory of name and object is one of the highlights. *Ming* serves to characterize the *shi* of the object, while this *shi* is always embodied in *wu*, what exists in the real world. *Wu* has to be perceived before being embraced by consciousness, analyzed and named (with a given name), understood (with its nature grasped), and interpreted (with the names and corresponding duties clarified). "*Wu* cannot be recognized, named, understood, interpreted, and become an object of consciousness without being perceived first" (Zong, 2017: 10–21). However, more symbolic phenomenological factors can be found in *zhiwulun* in the Pre-Imperial Period, which is discussed below.

5.2 *Zhi* and *Wu*: Reflection from the Perspective of Semiotic Phenomenology

The relationship between *zhi* 指 (finger, referent) and *wu* 物 (thing, object, entity) has been discussed in both philosophical and semiotic circles, providing useful references for research. However, opinions vary. Semiotic phenomenology holds that an entity is considered an object when the subject's consciousness is applied to it. Together, the subject and specific parts of the entity form a network of meanings, which paves the way for speculation about the relationship between *zhi* and *wu*. An entity is assigned relevant attributes when intentionality is involved, and these attributes are extracted and serve as *zhi*, the rest being ignored for the time being. This partialization marks the beginning of semiotization. Any type of *zhi* refers to the *zhi* of a given *wu*, that is, the consciousness of it, called *wuzhi*. When the subject recognizes and explains *wuzhi*, "denotation" occurs in the interaction between *zhi* and *wuzhi*. Once the law is established, the signifying process ends and a new one begins. In this context, *zhi* comes first, *wuzhi* second, and "denotation" third. "Denotation" is the "sign" of Peircean semiotics, from which the extension of meaning begins.

5.2.1 Various Schools of Thought on Zhi

Based on the study of traditional Chinese academic thought, the relationship between *zhi* and *wu* must be addressed, whether studying the philosophical history of the Pre-Imperial Period or semiotics. In addition, these tasks cannot be fulfilled without analyzing Gongsun Long's *zhiwulun*. *Gongsun Longzi* is the most obscure of the extant works of ancient Chinese philosophers, and "zhiwulun" is the most obscure chapter. The greatest difficulty lies in the obscurity of *zhi*, on which no agreement seems to have been reached. These divergent opinions are summarized below.

5.2.1.1 Interpretations of *Zhi* by the Traditional Logic Circle

Wu Feibai (1890–1965) was a well-known scholar of logic in early China, acclaimed as an excellent synthesizer for his achievements in this field. His *Doctrines of Ancient Chinese Scholars on Names* 中国古名家言, which took 49 years to complete, is considered "an important work in the study of logic and dialectics in the Pre-Imperial period for its exhaustiveness, insightfulness, and originality" (Zhang, 2014: 875), and has been well received by the academic world. When interpreting the sentence "all objects are characterized by *zhi* except *zhi* itself," Wu highlighted that "the object is the signified and *zhi* is the signifier. Without the latter, the former cannot be characterized; without the former, the latter can be attached nowhere. The two are in an object-subject relationship. They are not the same, but they cannot be separated either" (2009: 540). Wu also used the words *nengzhi* 能指 (signifier) and *suozhi* 所指

(signified). According to Li Xiankun (1927–2017), the two terms were likely created by Wu Feibai, as he could not have read Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* and related materials at the time (2006: 420–421). According to Wu Feibai, the "signified" is the object referred to, while the "signifier" serves to "characterize" the object. He also suggested that the two cannot be separated. An object must be characterized by a "signifier," while the "signifier" cannot be separated from the object it signifies. However, the two are not the same, "*Zhi* and *wu* are not the same, as the former is the 'signifier' while the latter is the 'signified.' Although the latter needs to be characterized by the former, the two are not the same" (Wu, 2009: 537). Tan Jiefu (1887–1974), an expert in the ancient theory of form and name, proposed that in Gongsun Long's theory, "*Zhi* can either be used as a noun or as a verb. When used as a verb, it emphasizes the process of denoting; when used as a noun, it refers to the names themselves" (1963: 18).

In an attempt to interpret 物莫非指指非指 (All *wu* are *zhi* except *zhi* itself) in *Gongsun Longzi*, Tu Youxiang analyzed and summarized Gongsun Long's *zhi* from the perspective of exegesis, pointing out that *zhi* refers to "characterization," i.e., "denotation":

> When there is denotation, conscious activities will inevitably be involved. The establishment of a particular relationship between *zhi* and *wu* is not without rules, to be sure, and it takes time and goes in a certain direction … In the process of denotation, conscious activities are needed. Otherwise, the meanings cannot be granted … Therefore, *zhi* refers to "denoting" meanings, that is, "signification." When *zhi* is used, the aforementioned meanings coexist (2011b: 338).

This statement addresses the topics of semiotic phenomenology. *Four Studies in the Philosophy of Language* 言境释四章was based on Tu's doctoral dissertation, which according to Tu in an interview, covered the topic of semiotics. "However, for the purity of the academic tradition, it is prepared in the framework of the 'ancient theory of form and name,' with no Western semiotic terms." (Tu & Zhu, 2017: 79) Nevertheless, it brings revelatory insights to the study of *zhiwulun.*

5.2.1.2 Interpretations of *Zhi* by the Philosophical Circle

To discuss ancient Chinese logic or philosophy, Gongsun Long and his academic thought must be explored. His *zhiwulun* was discussed by Hu Shi (1891–1962), Feng Youlan (1895–1990), Zhang Dainian (1909–2004), Ren Jiyu (1916–2009), Pang Pu (1928–2015), and other major figures of the philosophical circle in China. Hu Shi was the first to interpret *zhi* in *zhiwulun* from a modern philosophical perspective. When applying for his PhD degree at Columbia University, Hu Shi submitted *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* 先秦名学史, in which he suggested that *zhi* be understood as a "sign" or "mark," that is, "the signified" or "the attributes of an object" (2006: 137). Therefore, "all *wu* are *zhi*" indicates that every object contains attributes that can be perceived. In another book, Hu interpreted *zhi* as "all kinds of visible attributes such as the form and color of an object" (2010: 183). Similarly, interpreting Gongsun Long's *zhiwulun*, Feng Youlan pointed out:

> *Zhi* refers to what is denoted by a name. On one hand, what is denoted by a name can be a single object. In this sense, the "name serves to address an object." On the other hand, what is denoted by it can also be universal … As *zhi* and the object are placed side by side in *Gongsun Longzi*, they cannot be the same. Hence, *zhi* is more likely to be "universal," denoted by a name (2011: 121).

Ren Jiyu, a famous philosopher, religion scholar, and historian, maintained that *zhi* refers to the attributes of an object, which can be either abstract or concrete (1983: 507). Pang Pu, a renowned contemporary Chinese historian and philosopher, proposed that *wu* in *zhiwulun* refers to substance or existence, while *zhi* refers to consciousness and thinking. *Zhi* in Chinese (指) originally meant *finger* and then evolved into a verb, acquiring the meanings of denoting and intention (Pang, 1979: 20). Zhang Dainian held that *zhi* originally meant *to* represent, and later served to designate what the noun represented (2017: 271). As such, it is the interpretant of the name of an object.

Xu Fuguan (1903–1982) was a scholar with great achievements in the study of the logic of the Pre-Imperial Period in the philosophical circle, especially Gongsun Long's theory. His *Sequel to the Collection of the History of Chinese Thought* 中国思想史论集续编included articles such as "Logic and the School of Names of the Pre-Imperial Period" 先秦名学与名家 (286–309), "Interpretation of *Gongsun Longzi*" 公孙龙子讲疏 (310–355), and "Interpretation of *zhi* in *zhiwulun*" 释公孙龙子指物论之 "指"(387–395). Xu argued that *zhi* in Gongsun Long's *zhiwulun* refers to

> an image or reflection gained by a person when applying his cognitive ability to the real object, thus bringing the perceived object back to his consciousness. This reflection is what he depends on for further understanding. Once this reflection is complete, the next step is to choose an appropriate name for the object. But *zhi* is not the name. Reflection is based on the cognitive ability of the subject. When this ability is directed at something, that something is reflected. Hence, a reflection or image is obtained (2014: 392).

Clearly, this argument is close to semiotic phenomenology.

5.2.1.3 Deduction of *Zhi* in the Traditional Logic Circle

In general, logic is a branch of philosophy, but with a different focus. Wen Gongyi (1904–1996), a famous contemporary philosopher, logician, and educator, proposed that *zhi* as mentioned by Gongsun Long is an independent abstract entity that goes beyond the material world. "This objective abstract entity is the noumenon of the phenomenal world. Any *wu* that can be felt in the phenomenal world is only the incarnation of *zhi* in the noumenal world. *Wu* cannot exist without *zhi*, as *wu* is merely the embodiment of the aggregate of *zhi*." An object (*wu*) cannot be perceived without "indicators" (*wuzhi*) such as forms and smells. "Any *wu* in the world is made up of *wuzhi*, without which no *wu* will exist" (Wen, 1983: 41). Similarly, when interpreting Gongsun Long's "all *wu* are characterized by *zhi,*" Zhou Yunzhi (1934–present) pointed out that *zhi* does not exist objectively and independently but is possessed by all *wu*. *Zhi*, the objective abstract attributes of an object, such as

"solidness," "whiteness," and other attributes of a stone, are embodied and dependent on a *wu*. Certainly, general abstract attributes are contained in concrete objects of the objective world. However, Zhou was not justified in his view that "based on the two prerequisites and the relationship between *zhi* and *wu*, it is not inappropriate to interpret *zhi* as the name of a *wu*, as the 'name' is not objective and independent, but is possessed by all *wu*" (1993: 24). Unfortunately, in doing so, he confused *ming* (name) with *zhi*. This problem is further analyzed in the next section.

5.2.1.4 Introduction of Semiotic Theories and Semiotic Analysis of *Zhi*

Modern semiotics was introduced to China in the 1980s. Presenting the progress of semiotics at home and abroad at a semiotics seminar in Beijing and Tianjin organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on January 21, 1988, Zhao Yiheng noted that India, China, and Greece were the three birthplaces of semiotics, although the *Encyclopedia of Semiotics* edited by Thomas Sebeok failed to discuss semiotics in China. Therefore, "the establishment of Chinese semiotics is urgent" (Mian, 1988: 8–9). This shows that the study of traditional Chinese semiotics was still relatively rare in the mid- to late 1980s. It was later addressed by Hu Shengsheng, Liu Zongtang, and Li Xiankun.

Hu Shengsheng and Li Weiguo were among the first scholars to interpret *zhi* from a modern semiotic perspective. They argued that *zhi* in *zhiwulun* has the following four meanings: (1) as a verb it means "to denote"; (2) it is used to denote something with a certain meaning, or "to denote a component"—the signifier; (3) it is used as the meaning of the signifier, or "the component denoted"—the signified ("tenet" in Chinese); and (4) it is used as the signified (or meaning), which can be an object, a type of emotion, and anything that can be imagined (Hu & Li, 1988: 11).

Liu Zongtang argued that *zhi* could be interpreted as *signifier* (used as a noun) or as *to signify* (used as a verb). His theoretical basis was that signs are non-reflexive, meaning "they cannot refer to themselves." Therefore, "all objects are characterized by *zhi* except *zhi* itself" can be interpreted as "all objects can be denoted by signifiers, except the signifiers themselves" (Liu, 1989: 48–56). Liu cited in his references Li Xiankun's "Signs and Logic" (1989). Li was another pioneer in studying traditional Chinese academic thought with semiotics. His "Semiotic Thought in Gongsun Long's *Zhiwulun*" was originally part of "Semiotic thought in Gongsun Long's Theory of Name and Object" but was deleted because of the length limit of the article. It was later translated into English in "On Gongsun Long's *Zhi* Can't be Characterized by *Zhi*" and published in Europe (Li, 2006: 427). According to Li Xiankun, *zhi* in *zhiwulun* can be interpreted as an "indicator" or "sign." Thus, 物莫非指 (all objects are characterized by *zhi*) can be interpreted as "any object can be used as a sign serving to denote other objects" (Li, 2006: 423). However, he disagreed with Liu's idea of the "non-reflexivity" of signs.

Zhu Qianhong argued that Gongsun Long discussed *zhi* and *wu* as a pair to deepen his theory of *ming* ["name"] and *shi* ["nature"]. *Zhi* can be interpreted as signs. However, "signs refer to all marks including linguistic signs such as proper nouns,

common nouns, descriptions, and non-linguistic signs such as symbols and signals" (Zhu, 2005: 155). Therefore, according to Zhu, the content of *zhi* is more extensive than that of "names" (linguistic and written signs). However, *zhi* refers to more than signs. If it is simply interpreted as signs, some parts of *zhiwulun* make no sense. Therefore, its meaning needs to be further explored.

5.2.2 *All Objects Are Characterized by* Zhi*: Presentation of Phenomena*

Zhiwulun refers to nothing more than the relationship between *zhi* and *wu*. It is therefore necessary to define them clearly before clarifying their relationship. As mentioned, scholars have defined *zhi* and *wu* differently. Therefore, the analysis below is first conducted from a semantics perspective.

Zhiwulun begins with the statement 物莫非指而指非指 (*wu mo fei zhi er zhi fei zhi*, Wang, 1957: 62). This statement is generally considered the theme of the chapter. For example, Wu Feibai pointed out that these words reveal "the theme of the article." (Wu, 2009: 540) Chen Gaoyong also claimed they are "the only topic of the article. What the article deals with is no more than this repeated argument" (Chen, 2017: 16). Similarly, Chen Xianyou maintains they are "the general topic of the article" (Chen, 1990a, 1990b: 2). Therefore, by studying these words, the meaning of *wu* and *zhi* and their relationship can be understood, along with the essence of the article.

Wu is interpreted as "all objects in the world" in *Shuowen* (Duan, 2006: 53). In *Gongsun Longzi, wu* refers to "heaven, earth, and what originates therefrom" (Wang, 1957: 79), and in *Liezi*, it is defined as "whatever has form, semblance, sound, and color" (Yang, 2013: 52). Therefore, in terms of denotation, *wu* refers to any object in the world. In terms of attributes, *wu* refers to anything that has perceivable properties. The relationship between different *wu* was also discussed in *Liezi*: 物与物何以相远也?夫奚足以至乎先?是色而已。(Why are there great differences between different objects? What makes one object superior to another? After all, they are just objects with colors, Yang, 2013: 52). Yang Bojun (1909–1992), a Chinese linguist, proposed that in the above quotation, the character 形 (form) should be added before the character 色 (color) (1979: 49). As a result, the sentence indicates that the great differences between different objects are due to the recognition of the differences in their respective "forms and colors," the basis for differentiating one object from another. In addition, this is demonstrated by the evolution of the meaning of the word *wu*. Wang Guowei's textual research revealed that the Chinese character 物 *wu* originally referred to "the name of the variegated cattle and later acquired the meaning of 'object.' Different names are created because of the differences between different objects" (2003: 142). As there are great differences in the form, color, sound, and appearance of different objects, different objects have different names. Otherwise, they cannot be named differently or have different meanings. The most notable difference is the difference in their form, discussed in many Pre-Imperial

philosophical works. For instance, in *Guanzi*, it is stated that "each object has its inherent form, and its name serves to denote this form … There are great differences of form between different objects" (Li, 2004: 788). *The Yellow Emperor's Four Canons* suggested that "only if one remains in a state of formlessness and calmness of mind may he know that all things, however small, have their forms and names as soon as they come into existence. Once the forms and names are fixed, black and white will no longer be confused" (Chen, 2007: 10). *The Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei* informs us that "the myriad things of the world are different in shape and/or function. Therefore, one cannot be replaced by another" (Xu, 2009: 79).

Objects exist in a certain space and time and are reflected in certain forms. In addition, different objects have different forms. Thus, "names" are established by human beings to reflect and characterize these differences. As stated in *Guanzi*, "names are instituted by sages to denote objects" (Li, 2004: 776). Different objects and their respective attributes can be known through their respective names. A similar statement is found in *Yin Wenzi*, "the *Tao* has no specific form, whereas every object that has a specific form has a specific name. A name is intended to denote a form, and a form cannot be denoted without a name. Thus, no mistake should be made on names" (Wang, 1957: 22). The term "utensil" refers to all physical objects, as recorded in the *Book of Changes*, "Whatever has a specific form is called a utensil" (Chen, 2014e: 199). All objects have a form and name. Indeed, *Guanzi* stated that "all objects have their respective names" (Li, 2004: 778), and *Yin Wenzi* confirmed that "all objects are named" (Wang, 1957: 22). Each object has a form and name, even if an object can sometimes be almost indiscernible. Therefore, differentiating one object from another is possible only after the relationship between form and name has been established.

This is the first step in identifying different objects based on their differences. To better understand their nature, more efforts are needed to examine the process from *wu* to *zhi* (denotation) and recognize their relationship. *Zhi* was interpreted as "revelation" in *Erya* and as "the revelation of the attributes of an object" by Xing Bing, who explained "pointing to his palm" (Chen, 2014b: 21) as "showing something to somebody with one's hands" (Li, 1999a, 1999b: 58–59). With these analyses, it is easier to understand the meaning of *zhi*. In summary, *zhi* refers to the revealed attributes of a *wu* recognized and understood by human beings. *Zhi* enables people to recognize the appearance of a *wu*. As explained by Chen Gaoyong, "*Zhi* is what makes a *wu* what it is, or its attributes in modern terms. Attributes are manifested in various ways such as forms and colors. The parts perceived by human beings are known as the phenomena of things" (Chen, 2017: 15). The color, fragrance, and shape of an apple are part of its properties, without exception. From a phenomenological viewpoint, an entity will become an object with a certain meaning after consciousness is involved. The part touched by consciousness is the nature of that particular object, while the rest of its properties will be ignored for the time being. Chen Lai (1952–present) suggested that "'all *wu* are characterized by *zhi*" mainly refers to *wu* as a collection of perceivable properties (2016: 160). In other words, the different properties of a *wu* are perceived through conscious activities, which enables better understanding of the *wu*. Thus, *zhi* can be interpreted as part of

the displayed physical properties of the *wu*, rather than the *wu* itself. Zhao Yiheng commented:

> An object does not have to be fully grasped to convey a certain meaning: it will be against signification if too many properties of an object have a meaning … as a sign must have some meaning, only the specific properties of an object can be perceived by the recipient. In this sense, the object is reduced to a "simplified" form of meaning (2017b: 59).

The same idea is expressed in the following statement, "*Zhi* in *wu* can never denote *wu* as a whole. The details of *wu* can never be exhausted" (有指不至, 有物不尽). Zhang Zhan stated:

> If one relies on zhi, which is inevitably affected by the intentionality of the observer, to fully understand the properties of an object, he will have to come to terms with whatever properties of the object he obtains under specific circumstances. The properties obtained, incomplete as they are, are all that he can trust to understand the object. Hence, his understanding can never be perfect (Yang, 2013: 147–148).

Intentionality concerns only some of the perceivable properties of an object, or some of its attributes. If an object is denoted by a name derived from these attributes, the object cannot be fully characterized. Therefore, Chen Gaoyong's statement is only partially accurate.

Through *zhi*, *wu* can be gradually recognized and understood by the subject, resulting in an overall understanding of the object. In other words, the "nature" of the object will be learned, which is characterized by a "name." Regarding the relationship between name, nature, and object, I suggest that "nature" and "object" are not the same, the latter being a general term referring to a physical entity and the former an abstract term referring to the attributes of this entity. The "name" serves to characterize the former and denote the latter. For example, the horse mentioned by Gongsun Long refers to a horse, an objective animal species, when referring to the object, or to the "nature" of the horse when referring to its attributes (an equine mammal belonging to the Perissodactyla Equidae family). Its signifier in Chinese is 马 (English counterpart is *horse*), both being names. However, Chinese and English have different sign systems, one ideographic and the other phonographic. This explains why Chinese logicians suggested that "the name of an object is determined by its form" 形以定名 (Wang, 1957: 22). For example, the sign 马 *ma* (horse) in Chinese is defined according to the form of a horse. In such a definition, the name is used to "imitate the object" (Kong, 2007: 315). By defining a name, a physical object becomes a conceptual one; thus, the name 马 does not refer to a particular horse, but to all members of the horse family. The argument that "the purpose of telling others a name is to inform them of certain properties" 告以文名, 举彼实也故 expresses the same idea (Kong, 2007: 337). For example, when the name "horse" is mentioned, it refers to all members of the equine family. Once the sign system of "horse" is "established by conventions" 约之以命 (Kong, 2007: 420), the "nature of horses can be learnt" 因名以得实 (Wang, 1957: 30). Even someone who has never seen a horse before can learn its attributes through its name. "The extension of a concept consists in addressing an object without going beyond its limits. The connotation of a concept is to stipulate which object is characterized by it with the nature of the

object, so that the nature of the object can be adequately characterized" (Wang, 1957: 79). For example, the reason a horse is called a horse rather than an ox is because of its unique attributes. The attributes of an object are limited, making it possible to differentiate one object (horse) from another (ox). If an object has attributes that go beyond those of a horse, it will be named differently. As a result, by the end of the Warring States Period, the idea that "*ming* [name] and *shi* [nature] must be consistent" was formally proposed by Han Fei (Wang, 1998: 208). Although most commentators interpreted "the name and the nature" as the name of the monarch and his true power, the semiotic topic of "consistency between name and nature" was broached. Since the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BCE), "the name has long been inconsistent with the nature" (Li, 2004: 222). How to achieve "consistency between the two" (Kong, 2001: 350) was a concern of Pre-Imperial scholars, although many discussions on this topic also involved the name of the monarch and his true power, as mentioned. Wu Feiba believed that *Zhiwulun* was written when the country was troubled by "the inconsistency between name and nature" (2009: 539). As there seems to be no end to human beings' efforts to understand an object, chances are that "*Zhi* does not reach *wu*. Even if it is thought to have succeeded in doing so, more *zhi* will come to replace it" (Guo, 2004: 1106). In *Interpretation of Liezi*, discussing Hui Shi's view that "*zhi* alone is insufficient to characterize an object," Lu Chongxuan stated that "*zhi* alone is insufficient to characterize an object. Once an object is thoroughly characterized, *zhi* will no longer be needed" (Yang, 2013: 147). If *zhi* were sufficient to characterize an object, meaning activities would cease and signs would no longer be significant, as "once the meaning of an object has been communicated, signs will no longer be necessary" (Zhao, 2016b: 46). After all, *zhi* is simply the presentation of the part of phenomena that can be perceived by human beings, while the realization of meaning takes time. This is essentially a topic of semiotic phenomenology.

5.2.3 Zhi *and Denotation: Realization of Meaning*

Zhao Yiheng argued that "the qualia of objects, unless understood as carriers of particular meanings, are simply a type of presentation. However, once combined with consciousness, they become mediated representation" (2017b: 270). Essentially, when an object is left alone, its qualia are nothing more than a presentation. When human consciousness is applied, parts of the qualia of the object, considered necessary, are extracted and therefore become its representation. Representation is the result of semiotization, in which the qualia are partialized. In this sense, partialization is semiotization. Representation "is the result of the acquisition of the initial meaning of formal intuition" (Zhao, 2017b: 270). In other words, in conscious activities, an object is the source from which the subject can acquire the necessary meaning. However, only certain attributes of the object are activated by intentionality and presented in the form of qualia, which is *zhi* discussed above. For all objects,

only part of their attributes will be presented and the rest temporarily ignored in the subject's meaning acquisition process. Wu Feibai emphasized:

> The nature, as understood by Gongsun Long, shows us that the ontology of "objects" does not enter our cognition. However, as we are eager to learn, names are created to convey the understanding of the forms of the object mastered through our cognitive ability. What is conveyed in names is the nature of the meaning given to the object rather than the nature of the object itself. Why is it so? Meaning can be separated and reunited, but the object cannot. Meaning can be divided and united, but the object cannot. So what can be understood is the nature of the meaning given to the object, not the nature of the object in its entirety (2009: 539–540).

Being "eager to learn" is the driving force of the meaning acquisition process of consciousness, which allows an entity to become an object and to be presented in a form. Names are used to mark the content of such intentional/conscious activities. What is denoted by a name is merely part of the nature (attributes) of the object from which the meaning is derived, ignoring the rest for the time being. Therefore, Wu Feibai argued that what is characterized by the name is only "the nature of the meaning given to the object, not the nature of the object in its entirety" (Wu, 2009: 540). According to Gongsun Long, "names serve to address objects" (Wang, 1957: 81). In this case, *address* means *denote*; that is, names are the means by which objects are denoted. "Names are used to denote; the nature is what they denote" (Kong 2001: 350). Names are made for denotation. Therefore, Wu Feibai commented:

> Both *zhi* in the outside world and "meaning" in the inner world depend on "names" for expression and reflection. As *zhi* and "meaning" can neither express nor reflect themselves, names are used. However, names are shared and are therefore too general to be precise. What is specific and precise and consistent with the intended meaning is the "denotation." (2009: 519–520)

The attributes of an object recognized by people can be denoted by its name. Here, the content of the empirical world can be described in words, while everything beyond it is beyond description.

Therefore, Gongsun Long proposed that "all objects have their respective names, which however do not reflect their specific properties" (Wang, 1957: 64). A name is used to address an object as a whole rather than reflecting its attributes. For example, the name *horse* serves to address any member of the horse family rather than reflecting their specific form, hair color, and nature, as such properties can only be perceived and become the content of *zhi* under the pressure of intentionality. Therefore, *zhi* only refers to certain attributes of an object identified in the meaning acquisition process rather than to the whole object. An object remains unchanged in different circumstances, but its qualia vary with the purpose and means of meaning acquisition activities. This is illustrated by Xu Fuguan's remark that "*zhi* refers to the cognitive ability and to the image of an object obtained after applying this ability to the object" (2014: 322). Xu further proposed that "the reason we can know a real object is that we have the cognitive ability that can be directed at the object, which brings back what we perceive to be processed in our mind. As a result, an image of the object is obtained" (2014: 323). Part of the perceivable properties of an object will be

presented in the process of the conscious pursuit of meaning and become the object with a meaning, or "the image of the object" as Xu calls it. The image, having been processed by the subject, is not equal to the object itself. For example, the purplish red hair of a horse is only part of the horse's "image," while other properties may be ignored in this particular process of meaning acquisition. Some of these properties remain possibilities waiting for their time. Other properties extracted at a given time are what Gongsun Long called *wuzhi*.

Zhi refers to the presentation of the qualia of something under the pressure of intentionality. When consciousness is directed at something, it becomes the object enlightened by consciousness. Furthermore, this something, as a real object, under the pressure of intentionality, allows certain relevant properties to enter the consciousness of the cognitive agent. These properties are what is meant by *zhi*. As consciousness is always the consciousness of something, *zhi* is inevitably the *zhi* of that something, or *wuzhi* as it is called in Chinese. Wang Xuhua commented that "*zhi* is the phenomenal form of an 'object' and is therefore subordinate to it. Without the object, *zhi* would no longer exist and without *zhi*, the object could not be characterized" (1979: 137–138). I agree with him on this point. *Wu* becomes an object when it is targeted by consciousness, *zhi* being the phenomenal form it presents to the cognitive agent. That is, *zhi* refers to the *zhi* of a given object (*wu*), or specifically, *wuzhi*. *Wuzhi* is a concrete image of *zhi* acquired by consciousness. Therefore, Gongsun Long commented that "if there were no *wuzhi* in the world, who would talk about anything different from *zhi*? If there were no *wu* in the world, who would talk about *zhi*?" (Wang, 1957: 65) *Zhi* is embodied in a specific *wu* and presented as a type of phenomenon after *wu* has been targeted by consciousness. This is called *wuzhi*. Thus, *wuzhi* is by definition not independent. From a semiotic phenomenology viewpoint, when we talk about consciousness, we refer to the consciousness of something. The whiteness of a white horse is a phenomenal presentation under the pressure of intentionality. The same is true of the whiteness of a white stone. However, whiteness itself is an abstract common quality that exists, whether it is perceived or not. Whiteness belongs to what Wen Gongyi called an "independent abstract being" (see Sect. 4.2.1.3). The concept of whiteness cannot be substantiated without first being experienced by the cognitive agent. The attributes of an object that we can directly perceive are called "firstness" by Peirce, which is the first step of the semiosis. Over time, the cognitive agent acquires the relevant properties of different objects and develops a relevant consciousness of these objects, such as the whiteness of the horse and whiteness of the stone. This is what is meant by *wu-zhi*. From the perspective of Peirce's semiotic phenomenology, firstness is merely the presentment of a sign that awaits the consciousness of the cognitive agent. However, consciousness is always the consciousness of a particular object or thing. There is no transcendental consciousness or independent consciousness. As consciousness is always the consciousness of a phenomenon, it must return to the phenomenon itself while excluding its external forms. Peirce called this a "struggle." It is actually the interaction between two things, a process that has nothing to do with the thirdness (or medium) of any type, especially with the law of any action.

When consciousness is confronted with different objects, some of the qualia of these objects will be activated and extracted, while others will be suspended

temporarily in the interaction, also called "exclusion" or "confrontation." This refers to when no law has been established, when the nature and law of development of the object must be further explored. In other words, in this stage, the semiosis continues.

Thus, this allows us to interpret the argument that "without *zhi*, it would be impossible for things to be denoted. If it were impossible to denote things, would it mean that there are no attributes to denote?" (Wang, 1957: 63) Without attributes, an object cannot be characterized. Attributes that cannot be assigned to Object A can often be assigned to Object B. They will be assigned to a certain object, be it A or B. Indeed, the differences of attributes make it possible to differentiate different objects. Without these differences, multiple things would become one. These differences are presented in the form of *zhi* in the relationship network. No object can be recognized without being placed in a relationship, and no relationship is independent of all objects. All things exist in relation to other things. However, relationships themselves are not things. In other words, an object is presented in a relationship that has a meaning. "Any meaning is the result of the interaction of other meanings, and the reason for other meanings to be generated. This world of interaction is the real place where meaning is generated" (Wang, 2008: 85). The meaning of the whiteness of a white horse lies in its difference from the yellowness of a yellow horse and blackness of a black horse. Thus, Gongsun Long further emphasizes:

> At the beginning, *zhi* is something that the world has. When there is no *zhi*, things cannot be described as indescribable. To say that things cannot be described as indescribable does not mean that there are things that are indescribable; to say that there is nothing that is not describable, things are accepted as such because they are designated as such by *zhi*. What is designated by *zhi* is not equal to what exists to be designated. *Zhi* and what exists to be designated are different from the process of designation (Wang, 1957: 63).

As mentioned, *zhi* refers to the *zhi* of a given object, and no *zhi* is independent of all objects. Therefore, *zhi* is something that does not exist in the natural world. Although no properties are independent of any object, it is incorrect to conclude that an object has no properties of its own. In other words, each object has its own properties. As there is no object that has no attribute of its own, all objects have attributes of their own. The attributes of an object cannot be presented without the pressure of intentionality. When presented, they are simply part of the qualia of the object, rather than the object in its entirety. Therefore, "what is designated by *zhi* is not equal to what exists to be designated." Indeed, *zhi* only refers to certain attributes of the object. For example, whiteness is the color attribute of a white horse's hair. When whiteness is combined with the horse (the object), conscious activities will focus on the horse's hair color, rather than on its nature, the texture of its flesh, or any other attributes of the horse. The meaning acquisition process will then end for now, while other activities of the same type will continue. Based on the different meaning acquisition activities, it can be concluded that "things are accepted as such because they are designated as such by *zhi*." According to Zhao Yiheng, "When a certain quale of an entity is perceived by consciousness, the entity becomes the object of recognition. In the presentation of consciousness, the partialized quale is a sign of the entity. Thus, a relationship of semiotic signification is established between the two, in which the part leads to the whole" (2016a: 10). When an entity is represented

by *zhi*, it becomes the object, with the related concepts derived from *zhi* serving as interpretants. This is how its meaning is established.

Feng Youlan proposed that "in the history of Chinese philosophy, some philosophical propositions have two types of meaning: an abstract meaning and a concrete meaning" (1958: 87). The concrete meaning is the meaning of philosophical propositions in the context of their birth, while the abstract meaning is the possible meaning of such philosophical propositions, which remains to be elucidated. The Pre-Qin Period was China's "Pre-Imperial Period," or "Axial Period" as per Jaspers (Jaspers, 1953: 1). This was an era of prosperity of Chinese thought, comparable to that of Greece in the days of Plato and Aristotle. During this period, various thinkers and philosophers proposed many meta categories in the history of Chinese academic thought. The questions raised at that time were reviewed and advanced by scholars of later generations. Thought and learning were also advanced in this "return-promotion mode." Indeed, the speculation and reflection of ancient Chinese philosophers on *zhi* and *wu* paved the way for scholars of later generations to study the "abstract meaning" of semiotic phenomenology. Although semiotic phenomenology did not exist at that time, topics related to it were discussed. Indeed, *zhi* and *wu* were repeatedly discussed in works such as *Mozi*, *Liezi*, *Gongsun Longzi*, and *Zhuangzi*, providing us with inspirations and materials. Starting with "all things are characterized by *zhi*" (Wang, 1957: 62), *Zhiwulun* clarified that an entity becomes an object when it enters the consciousness of the cognitive agent. When it becomes *wuzhi* under the pressure of intentionality, the semiosis process begins. When it reaches "denotation," recognition and interpretation are possible. Such was the speculation of ancient Chinese philosophers on semiosis. Based on the framework of the three categories of Peirce, *zhi*, which is diverse and full of possibilities, belongs to firstness. When it approaches an object, it evolves into *wuzhi*, secondness, after being perceived, divided, and extracted by the cognitive agent. The combination of *zhi* and *wuzhi* serves to characterize an object, a process called "denotation." This corresponds to Peirce's thirdness or the "sign" in the true sense of the word. Of course, whether my tentative explanation is reasonable needs to be tested by future philosophers.

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Chapter 6
The Endgame of Pre-imperial Semiotic Thoughts

When King Ping of Zhou relocated the capital to Luoyang in 770 BCE, the once powerful Zhou Period was past its prime in terms of political dominance and imperial power. The Eastern Zhou Period was characterized by the collapse of ritual and musical systems, disintegrated kingship, and conflicts between feudal princes fighting for supremacy. In the Warring States Period, "reverence for kingship" was completely abandoned. Various wars were waged to capture cities and expand territories. As conventional ritual and musical semiotic systems did not have the capabilities required to maintain social and political order, the question of "what should be done to restore order" became one of the three main topics for the Hundred Schools of Thought (Ge, 2005: 158) During this period, various states fought fiercely to annex others.

> The period was marked by competition for power and resources. Cunning schemes and violent forces were valued, whereas virtue and morality were despised. High on the agenda was the pursuit of wealth, while the practice of virtues such as modesty was delayed. Therefore, there were very affluent people with great fortune, and there were also poor people who did not have enough food to eat. Powerful feudatory states annexed small ones and made the defeated princes their subjects, while weak states ended up suspending their sacrifice and perishing from the world (Sima, 1982: 1442).

People consumed by more desires were led to question the goodness of human nature and wonder whether humans were born evil. As a result, strict punishments and laws were introduced to help restore order. Ritual, musical, and legal systems of signs were all products of history, consistent with the vicissitudes of the time. Long periods of division led to unity. The First Emperor of Qin Dynasty eventually conquered the other six states and unified the nation. He also purged the intellectual class by burning books and burying Confucian scholars alive. With that, prosperity and diversity in academic studies gave way to unity in thought. This marked the end of the era of the Hundred Schools of Thought, the heyday of the Pre-Imperial thought on signs.

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6.1 Inheritance and Deviation: The Relationship Between Xunzi and Han Fei

During the late Warring States Period, Xunzi created an inventory of the doctrines of Confucianism. His thought originated from Confucianism but was not limited to it. His disciple, Han Fei, absorbed the findings of other philosophers of the Legalist School and developed out of them his own representative doctrines. Han Fei used some doctrines of Xunzi to further develop his thoughts. From the perspective of semiotics, Xunzi carried out both internal and external governance through the cultivation role of ritual and musical signs and the manipulative function of legal signs. In contrast, Han Fei focused on the disciplinary function of legal signs in regulating people's semiosis. Han Fei's doctrines contributed to the unification of the Qin Dynasty, but his penchant for legislative regulation to the exclusion of spiritual cultivation is also one reason for its sudden collapse (Yang, 1990: 188).

Since the second chapter provided a detailed analysis of the sign systems of ritual and musical cultures, this section introduces legal signs. The world inhabited by humans is a physical one made up of natural substances but "shaped" by our perception of it and our language and thinking abilities. The division of space and time is the product of a "modeling" process resulting in a semiotic space. Thanks to the development of our language and thinking abilities, human activities, once generated by our animal instincts, have become vectors of meaning. Ritual conducts are semiosis that other humans can recognize. Originally, ritual and musical events were meant to educate and civilize people. However, their power weakened with the disintegration of the ritual and musical systems. Therefore, Legalist literati resorted to legal punishments to discipline the public and restore order from chaos. This goal is evident in documents including Zichan's *Xingshu* 刑书 (The Punishment Book, or Book of Penalty) and Li Kui's *Fajing* 法经 (The Book of Law) and led to a set of explanatory and behavioral systems capable of regulating human activities. In other words, "legal signs" refers to the system of laws guaranteed by force to regulate people's semiosis.

Before continuing, we must understand the relationship between the theories of Xunzi and those of Han Fei, as this offers important insights into the orientation and conclusion of Pre-Imperial thought on signs. According to *Records of the Grand Historian*, Han Fei and Li Si, two disciples of Xunzi, became the leading figures of the Legalist School. Han and Li attended school together and were peers. "They both learned under the guidance of Xunzi; the latter always held himself inferior to the former" (Sima, 1982: 2146). From the fact that Li left Xunzi for the Qin state in 246 BCE, it can be concluded that Han Fei was learning from Xunzi before this date. As Xunzi's disciple, Han Fei shared with his master an interest in rituals, laws, and human nature. There are differences and similarities between their views. In a sense, Han Fei adopted some of Xunzi's views and pushed them so far that he was believed to have gone to the extremes. The evolution of the theories of Xunzi and Han Fei was also closely related to the general trend toward societal unification at the time.

Xunzi considered himself a disciple of Confucius. His time was beset by fierce political conflicts and wars, coupled with the collapse of traditional ritual and musical signs. The dominant social ideology of the time focused on what could be done to restore or rebuild the social order. Although Xunzi emphasized the regulation of the ritual system, his ritual system was not the same as that of Confucius. Confucius advocated the restoration of the ritual system of the Zhou Period and sought to maintain the established hierarchical system and to include these rituals in the moral system. He dreamed of leading individuals to recognize and identify with the social hierarchy formed by the ritual system. Conversely, Xunzi believed the new ritual system needed a reshuffle:

> Descendants of kings and dukes or knights and grand officers, if unable to devoutly observe the requirements of ritual and moral principles, should be relegated to the position of commoners. In contrast, descendants of commoners, if they accumulate culture and study, rectify their character and conduct, and are able to devoutly observe the requirements of ritual principles and justice, should be brought to the ranks of a prime minister, knight or grand officer (Wang, 1988: 148).

These lines indicate that Xunzi's idea of rituals refers not to an innate status, but to one acquired through learning, cultivation, and talent, favoring impressive acts and contributions in preference to birthright.

The *Tao* advocated by Xunzi somewhat deviates from that of Confucius. Confucius takes *Ren* 仁 (literally, benevolence) as its core and *Li* 礼 (literally, ritual or propriety) as the norms of his *Tao* and focuses on abstract spiritual pursuit. While Confucius spent his life pursuing the *Tao* and kept learning from it, Xunzi thought differently. According to the "The Teachings of the Ru (Confucian)" in *Xunzi*, "The Way of which I speak is not the Way of heaven or the Way of Earth, but rather the Way that guides the actions of mankind and is embodied in the conduct of the gentleman" (Wang, 1988: 128). Therefore, Xunzi's *Tao* is not as metaphysical as that of Confucius but rather a physical version of the *Tao*. Wang Xianqian quoted Wang Niansun in his *Collected Exegesis of Xunzi*, "The *Tao* can guide the actions of mankind. If the *Tao* is accessible, people can access it. The *Tao* embodied in the conduct of a gentleman is open to all, yet not everyone can access it. Those who can are called gentlemen" (1988: 122). These lines indicate that the *Tao* is the road on which we walk and move forward under the guidance of gentlemen. The meaning of "*Tao*" is further revealed in "On the *Tao* of a Lord" in *Xunzi*:

> What is the "Way"? I say that it consists of the principles followed by a lord. What is a "lord"? I say that he is one who can assemble. Where does his ability to assemble come from? I say that it lies in his expertise in providing a living for people and caring for them, expertise in organizing and ordering men, expertise in providing clear principles for the orderly disposition of people, and expertise in limiting errors and refining people. One who is an expert in providing a living for people and caring for them will have mankind feel kinship with him. One who is an expert in organizing and ordering men will have them be happy with him. One who is an expert in providing clear principles for the orderly disposition of people will have them be happy with him. One who is an expert in limiting errors and refining people will have them honor him. When these four guiding principles are complete in him, the world will come to him as to their own home. Such a man can indeed be described as "able to assemble." (Wang, 1988: 237)

Xunzi defined the *Tao* as a means of governance adopted by a lord; that is, the ability to "assemble" or recruit people, which can be divided into expertise in caring for, limiting, choosing, and refining people. In this way, people will rely on the lord, show their obedience to him, be fond of him, and be proud of him. Once a lord has these four elements, the whole world will be under his control. This illustrates well the shift from rituals to laws, from the metaphysical *Tao* of Confucius to the physical *Tao* of Xunzi. Self-perfection and transcendence are no longer the focus of attention. Obviously, it is also related to Xunzi's doctrine that human nature is evil, which clearly differentiates him from Mencius, another Confucian master, who conformed to the doctrine that human nature is good:

> Mencius contends that "as man can learn, his nature is good." I say that it is not the case. It shows that Mencius does not reach any real understanding of what man's inborn nature is and that he does not investigate the division between the things that are inborn in man and those that are acquired. As a general rule, "inborn nature" embraces what is spontaneous from Nature, what cannot be learnt, and what requires no application to master. Ritual principles and moral duty are creations of the sages. They are things that people must study to follow and to which they must apply themselves before they can fulfill their precepts. What cannot be acquired through learning and cannot be mastered through application, yet is found in man, is rightly called "inborn nature." What must be learnt before a man can do it and what he must apply himself to before he can master it, yet is found in man, is rightly called "acquired nature." This is precisely the distinction between "inborn" and "acquired" nature (Wang, 1988: 435–436).

Xunzi doubted Mencius' idea that learning is the cornerstone of people's good nature. He argued that Mencius' distinction between "inborn" and "acquired" is unclear. Instead, he suggested that people's inborn nature embraces what comes spontaneously from nature and needs no cultivation, while their acquired nature can only take shape after learning. Wang quoted Yang Liang in his *Collected Exegesis of Xunzi*:

> 伪 (*wei*, literally, artificial, hypercritical, or acquired) means to change and rectify people's inborn nature. What is not born in nature is called acquired nature. The Chinese character 伪 consists of *ren* 人, meaning man, and *wei* 为, meaning make. With the two parts put together, the associative compound gets its meaning: manmade (1988: 434).

This quote shows that *wei* 伪 refers to acts committed intentionally, as distinct from its lexical meaning of hypocrisy. According to Xunzi, man is born with a love of profit, feelings of envy and hatred, and desires for things pleasant to ears and eyes. If we indulge in these desires, conflicts, violence, crimes, and dissolute and wanton behaviors will develop. Thus, we must regulate these desires with rituals and laws, and subject them to the rule of the *Tao*. Certainly, Xunzi did not altogether deny human nature:

> A straight board does not need the press frame to be straight; it is straight by nature. But a warped board must first wait for the application of the press frame, steam to soften it, and force to bend it into shape before it can become straight, because by nature, it is not straight. Thus, as the nature of man is evil, it must wait for the government of wise kings and the transformation resulting from rituals and morality before everything develops in the right order and is consistent with what is good (Wang, 1988: 441).

Just as a board can either be straight or warped, human nature can either be good or evil. Those with an evil nature should be restricted by the governance of philosophical kings and cultivated with rituals and moral values so that they evolve and conform to goodness. The environment certainly has a considerable effect on the formation of human nature, as the following sayings assert, "The children of Hann 干 and Yue 越 and of the tribes of Yi 夷 and Mo 貉 are all born making the same sounds, but they grow up having different customs because the process of education has effected such changes in them" (Wang, 1988: 2). In addition, "Raspberry vines growing among hemp plants are not staked, yet they grow up straight" (Wang, 1988: 5). Xunzi did not neglect this distinction. On one hand, his idea of human nature as evil highlights the importance of acquired learning. On the other, this idea led him to believe that the emperor should rule with centralized power, a concept further developed by his disciple Han Fei.

While Han Fei built on Xunzi's doctrine that human nature is evil, his theory was different. Xunzi believed that human beings seek to obtain benefits and avoid harm, and as there are no rules to regulate them, they head toward the path of evil. In contrast, Han Fei considered humans as born evil. Xunzi still believed there are some "straight boards," whereas Han Fei completely excluded this possibility, "In one hundred generations there is neither an arrow that is straight by itself nor a wheel that is round by itself" (Wang, 1988: 462). Because of his disbelief in the innate goodness of human beings, Han Fei was vigilant at all times. The article "Guarding Against the Interior" (Wang, 1988: 115–117) embodies his darkest thoughts. Han Fei did not trust anyone, believing that people are born evil. For him, a king would be controlled if he were to trust any man. The people serve the king out of fear of his mighty power but never cease to pry into his inner thoughts. Therefore, if the king were to relax his control, he would be vulnerable to their schemes. The king can neither trust his sons, his concubines, nor his queen, who all pray for his early death, as only then will they gain greater power. According to Han Fei, one must remain suspicious and attentive to everything and everyone, as people are all born evil. In addition to this philosophy, a king must comprehensively use the aforementioned laws, rules, and powers to control his people in the hope they will help him govern the nation.

In comparison, Xunzi emphasized the importance of education and learning in transforming inborn nature into acquired nature, holding that rituals and laws can help guide people and regulate the real world. Living at a time of deception, intrigue, wars, and massacres, Han Fei absolutely denied this idea. He was so blinded by the evil he saw that he could not believe in the kindness and goodness of human nature. In his view, a ruthless reality reigned over a life of poetics. As Ge Zhaoguang stated, "Men living in such a time have already developed the coldest and most radical rationality, the most practical one. They no longer trust rituals or symbols that bring no easy benefits nor punishments, nor do they trust the useless conscience or morality" (2005: 164). Such was the transformative trajectory of the time![1]

[1] Qian Mu pointed out in his discussion on the relationship between Confucianism and the Legalist School that "everyone imagines that the Legalist School came from morality, but it came from

6.2 The Philosophical Work of Xunzi and His Thoughts on Signs

Xunzi's thoughts on signs focused on exploring and summarizing the Confucian theory of rituals and names. Xunzi proposed that ritual and musical symbols have an internal regulatory effect, but that laws should be enforced to maintain social order. He believed that laws are more important than rituals in this regard. Xunzi systematically summarized the Pre-Imperial theory of names including their definition and origin, principles of naming, and the reason for and significance of their correct use. Objectively, his intention to unify philosophical thought by advocating the correct use of names facilitated the unification of various states. Thus, it is concluded that the alignment of philosophical thoughts paved the way for the great unification of the Qin Dynasty.

6.2.1 Xunzi's Summary of Thoughts on Ritual and Musical Signs

Our discussion in the second chapter of Confucian's thought on signs as expressed by Confucius and Mencius showed that Confucius sought to incorporate the ritual and musical signs designed by the Duke of Zhou for political purposes into moral and ethical principles. Indeed, in an era wherein ritual and musical systems had collapsed, Confucius wanted to guide people to voluntarily accept the ritual principles passed on from the Western Zhou Period through moral conduct. In fact, this ritual system is a double articulation, differentiating the signified by means of the signifier, and therefore contributing to the formation of social relationships and a hierarchical ladder. Confucius argued that if everyone acted in accordance with the ritual system, the whole world would be at peace. In other words, if the language of people were regulated and put to common use, people would understand each other, society would move toward harmony, and conflict would give way to peace. Of course, this is a highly idealized concept. At the time, society was plagued by immorality, with dukes competing for supremacy, scholar-bureaucrats conspiring against princes, and subjects launching rebellions. In addition, people were so full of desires that they abandoned the ritual system in favor of enhancing their worldly reputation. These degrading acts were frequent, and the situation was worsening.

Confucianism. The idea of law observance and duty fulfilment was in fact the duplication of Confucius' philosophy of rectification of names and restoration of rituals, but one that was adapted to the needs of the time." (2011: 238) The Confucian philosophy of the rectification of names and restoration of rituals and Legalist doctrine of the correspondence of names and severe punishments both aimed to restore social order. The seemingly contrastive views are actually adaptations to meet the needs of different times. Chen Qiyou also considered Han Fei's thought as a projection into the philosophical world of the intense political struggle and cunning social morality of the Warring States Period (1990: 2).

Xunzi lived near the end of the Warring States Period when only a few warring powers remained after a long period of annexation. The Zhou Period was replaced by Qin in 256 BCE. In their race for official positions and wealth, "People's hearts were like those of tigers and wolves, and their behaviors were like those of wild beasts" (Wang, 1988: 21). In general, the dark side of human nature is exposed during brutal warfare, and this episode of social upheaval and brutality was no exception. Confucius' idea of maintaining the social order based on humans' conscious morality was thus outdated and unrealistic.

Nourished by the works of Confucius, Xunzi recognized the cultivation effect of ritual and musical signs, which, however, did not suffice to bring the desired outcome. He kept searching and eventually became inspired by the thoughts of the Legalists. He began emphasizing the regulatory role of legal signs in human society.

First, Xunzi attached great importance to the function of the double articulation of ritual and musical signs, as reflected in his philosophical work:

> How did the ritual principles emerge? I say that men are born with desires, which if not satisfied, cannot but lead them to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires, men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, it will be impossible for them not to argue on the means to satisfy their desires. This contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The ancient Kings abhorred such disorder, so they established the regulations with ritual and moral principles to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men and to provide the means to satisfy them. They fashioned their regulations so that desires should not want for things to satisfy them and goods are not exhausted by desires. In this way, the two, desires and goods, sustain each other over time. This is the origin of ritual principles. Thus, the meaning of rituals is to nurture (Wang, 1988: 346).

On the origin and role of ritual principles, Xunzi suggested that men are born with desires that if unbridled, will lead them to expose their "evil nature," a point developed in the chapter "Man's Nature is Evil" (Wang, 1988: 435). If people pursue their desires without regulation, conflicts will occur, which will cause social unrest and pose challenges to governance. To avoid such unrest, the ancient sages designed ritual and musical systems to classify people into different groups. Imposing different rules on ritual and musical signs, they grouped people as humble and noble, and assigned them to different positions in the hierarchy, making it known to them whether they were close to or distant from each other.

The fundamental role of ritual and musical principles is to nurture the desires of men and provide them with the means to satisfy them, "The meat of pastured and grain-fed animals, rice and millet, and blends and combinations of the five flavors nourish the mouth. The fragrance of peppercorns and aromas and bouquets of orchids nourish the nose. Carved and polished jade; incised and inlaid metals; and fabrics embroidered with the white and black axe emblem, with the azure and black notched stripe, with the azure and crimson stripe, and with the white and crimson blazon nourish the eye. Bells and drums, flutes and chime stones, lutes and zithers, reed pipes and reed organs nourish the ear. Spacious rooms, secluded chambers, mats of plaited rushes, couches and bed mats, armrests and cushions nourish the body" (Wang, 1988: 347). In this way, men's basic desires were satisfied by nurturing and regulating them through "ritual principles." It is argued that "the ancient Emperors

have created a golden means of ensuring that desires are not limited to physical things and that physical things are not exhausted by desires, and as a result, the two can sustain each other in the long run. This is the real origin of ritual principles" (Wang, 1988: 346). Thus, rituals were derived from the act of "nurturing."

The gentlemen of the ruling class emphasized differences after "nurturing," which is a basic way of naming and grouping people into a hierarchical structure, "When the gentleman has been nurtured by these things, he will also be fond of ritual distinctions" (Wang, 1988: 347). Specifically, "these refer to gradations of rank according to nobility or baseness, the disparities between the privileges of the old and the young, and the modes of identification corresponding to poverty or wealth, insignificance or importance" (Wang, 1988: 347). When people's basic needs are "nurtured," distinctions appear and are reflected in gradations of rank according to nobility, seniority, and hierarchy. Xunzi listed the different ways used by the emperor (the Son of Heaven) to take care of his comfort, his sense of smell, his sense of sight, and his sense of hearing, which are only developed at a higher level of "nurturing"; that is, the "nurturing" of sacredness, majestic authority, and a sense of security. Therefore, there are different types of "nurturing." If nurturing an ordinary person involves nurturing his physical needs, then nurturing a gentleman means nurturing his more refined features, as stated in "Discourse on Ritual Principles", "All rites begin with coarseness, are brought to fulfillment with form, and end with pleasure and beauty" (Wang, 1988: 355). Wang Xianqian quoted Hao Yixing in his *Collected Exegesis of Xunzi*, "Rituals come from restriction, are fulfilled with form and ornaments, and end with joy and pleasure" (1988: 355). Rituals were originally designed as a way to regulate people's desires and prevent them from turning to the evil side. Therefore, their desires must be nurtured. In addition, nurturing a gentleman is a higher form of nurturing than that of common people who only care about their physiological needs. The nurturing of a gentleman is "fulfilled with form and ornaments," which as meaning carriers, differentiate people with their social ranks and hierarchical positions. These sign patterns are more clearly manifested in the following passage:

> Rites use valuables and ordinary objects to make offerings, use distinctions between noble and basic to create forms, modify the amount according to differences in station, and elaborate or simplify to give each their due. When form and principle are emphasized and emotions and offerings are treated perfunctorily, this is the greatest elaboration of rituals. When emotions and offerings are emphasized and form and principle are treated perfunctorily, this is the greatest simplification of rituals. When form and principle and emotions and offerings are treated as inside to outside, as external manifestation to inner content, so that both are translated into action and are combined, this is the average course of rituals (Wang, 1988: 357).

When used for offerings, valuables and ordinary objects become signs with different meanings because the ornamentation, quantity, and size differ. Wang Xianqian quoted Yang Liang in his *Collected Exegesis of Xunzi*, "Form and principle relate to majesty, emotions and offerings relate to loyalty. If the rites are accompanied by sacrifices and worship by hosts and guests, emotions are manifested by the hosts and form out-valued emotions, this is the greatest elaboration of rituals" (1988: 357). Here, these events are grammars of meaning generation through giving offerings.

Moreover, Xunzi advocated the "moderate" way, which refers to the appropriate and just external manifestation of "content" by "form." "Rites cut what is too long, stretch what is too short, eliminate excess, remedy deficiency, and extend cultivated forms that express love and respect, so that they increase and complete the beauty of the conduct according to one's duty" (Wang, 1988: 363). Gentlemen use the form of rites to express their respect and emotions, while petty men take advantage of rites as a manifestation of their righteousness, establishing "a middle course for gentlemen and petty men" (Wang, 1988: 363). For instance, Xunzi advocated the middle course in funeral rites, noting that grief and respect are conveyed through the form of rites, "As a general principle, rituals related to birth provide ornaments for expressions of joy, while sending off the dead provides ornaments for expression of grief; by presenting sacrificial offerings, rituals embellish feelings of reverence" (Wang, 1988: 369). In doing so, one will not overindulge in mourning to the point of harming one's health. Based on the above passages, it is concluded that Xunzi's ritual principles, although derived from Confucius, were very different. His "middle course" reflected his rational attitude toward ritual and musical signs. The effects of these signs in semiosis have become the metalanguage of his theory concerning rituals. His attitude toward music was no different.

According to Xunzi:

> Music is joy. Being an essential part of man's emotional nature, the expression of joy is by necessity, inescapable. This is why men cannot live without music. Where there is joy, it will come out in the sounds of the voice and be manifested in the movement of the body. It is the Way of Man that singing and movements, which are an excitation of man's emotional states according to the rules of inborn nature, are expressed in music (Wang, 1988: 379).

The sign system of "music" conveys men's thoughts via perceivable signs such as voice and movement. "Delight" and "anger" can both be exhibited by musical signs. Xunzi believed that musical signs have the power to "unite people in feelings of reverence," "link them in close kinship," and "unite them in obedience" (Wang, 1988: 379). However, there is a type of music from the states of Zheng and Wei that disrupts the hearts of men; therefore, people need guidance:

> Therefore, it is said, "music is joy." The gentleman enjoys obtaining correct instruction; the petty man enjoys obtaining what he desires. When music is used to guide and regulate desires, there is enjoyment but no disorder; when it is used for desires with no guiding thought, there is delusion but no enjoyment. Therefore, musical performances are the way to guide enjoyment (Wang, 1988: 382).

The word "guiding" refers to the cultivation of music advocated by our ancestors, as music can change manners and customs, as Wang Xiaodun claimed.

> So-called "music cultivation" refers to the cultivation of rites and manners. It came from sacrificial ceremonies where music was seen as a vehicle linking humankind with heaven, thus contributing to harmony between mankind and society … Music cultivation does not mean to educate people about musical skills. Music does not work independently, but in conjunction with ceremonies or rites. Music cultivation, in its true sense, is not for art or aesthetics, let alone for entertainment, but a mode of education and cultivation. Foster among people's due respect for and obedience to the community and the social order by influencing their thoughts and conduct (2014: 10).

Rituals work in coordination with music to regulate the social order and serve societal governance. However, they emphasized different things in creating unity and harmony, "Music joins together what is common to all; rituals separate what is different" (Wang, 1988: 382). Rituals are meant to distinguish what is different whereas music aims to bring together what is similar so that people live together in peace and harmony.

Xunzi's discussion of ritual and musical signs indicates that his intention was similar to that of Confucius, as both focused on the regulatory effect of these two systems on the social order. This intention was also manifested in his dialogue with King Zhao of Qin, recorded in "The teaching of the Ru." King Zhao of Qin felt that the Ru was of no benefit to the state, an argument countered by Xunzi:

> The Ru model themselves after the ancient Emperors; they exalt ritual and moral principles; as ministers and sons they are careful to estimate their superiors to the highest degree. Should a ruler of men employ them, they exercise power and influence in his court in an appropriate fashion. Should he not employ them, then acting sincerely, they withdraw and organize people, being invariably obedient in their role as subjects. Although they are impoverished and beleaguered, starving and freezing, they will certainly not use some perverse way out of greed. Although they have no land, they are clear about the great principle that protects the altars of soil and grain. Although when they cry out, no one can respond to them, they are acquainted with the classic standards and ordering norms to control and complete the myriad things and nourish the Hundred Clans. When they occupy a position of power and influence above people, they have the character and talent to be a king or duke; when they occupy a position that is subordinate, they are a true minister of the altars of soil and grain and a real treasure for the lord of a state. Yet, even when they remain hidden in a poor alley in a leaking house, no one will fail to appreciate the Precious Way that is preserved in them (Wang, 1988: 117–118).

The Ru model themselves after the ancient emperors and exalt ritual and moral principles. They assume their duties and revere their superiors. Being employed by the ruler or not, they always remain in their role and never exceed their authority. Even if they are as poor as a church mouse, they will never engage in perverse causes. They have been cultivated according to ritual and musical principles, and their morality is respectable. Xunzi emphasized the regulatory effect of the teaching of the Ru on the social order, arguing that the inner recognition of ritual and musical signs can help cultivate people, rule the state, and stabilize society. "The great compendium" states, "Ritual principles are the guiding ropes that pull the government. When the government does not use ritual principles, the government will not succeed" (Wang, 1988: 492). "Guiding ropes" refers to the driving force of a government through ritual and musical principles. Without this, chaos will occur. Conversely, "Ritual principles provide the footing men tread on. When men lose their footing, they stumble and fall, sink and drown. When the observance of small matters is neglected, the resulting disorder is great. Such are the ritual principles" (Wang, 1988: 492). Xunzi drew an analogy between rituals and man's footing, suggesting that if men lose their footing, they will stumble and fall. This seemingly trivial loss will lead to serious consequences such as the collapse of ritual principles. This highlights his emphasis on the cultivation of ritual and musical principles. In short, Xunzi believed that "the relationship between ritual principles and the correct governance of a nation is similar

to that of the suspended balance and steelyard and determination of the weight or that of the darkened marking line and straightness. Thus, a man without rituals cannot live, an undertaking without rituals cannot succeed, and a nation without rituals cannot be tranquil" (Wang, 1988: 495). Thus, the cultivation role of the systems of ritual and musical signs should not be underestimated.

Aside from valuing the guiding role of ritual and musical signs in the construction of the social order, Xunzi emphasized the regulatory effect of legal signs on people's behaviors. He believed that it was unrealistic to attempt to maintain the social order through "rituals" with no binding force. Cultivation with ritual and musical principles is not enough to restore order; punishment based on laws is also essential to regulate intractable people. As argued in "On the Regulations of a King":

> The main distinction in adjudicating the affairs of governments: those who come forward with good intentions should be treated with complete ritual courtesy, those who come forward without good intentions should be punished. In both cases, if the distinction is kept separate, the worthy and the unworthy will not be mixed and right and wrong will not be confused. When the worthy and the unworthy are not mixed, the brave and heroic will come forward; when right and wrong are not confused, the nation will be well ordered. When things are like this, the ruler's reputation is clearly highlighted, the world will long for him, his decrees will be heeded in every action, people will respect what he forbids, and the tasks of the True Emperor will be completed (Wang, 1988: 149).

Xunzi clearly noted the key task of governance: to treat differently "those with good intentions" and "those without good intentions." The former deserve ritual courtesy, while the latter deserve punishment. In this way, the worthy and unworthy are distinguished, leaving room for talented people. Right and wrong will not be mixed, and the state will be showered in peace and tranquility. Moreover, "ritual principles" vary according to social rank:

> It is the meaning of ritual principles that there should be rankings according to nobility or baseness, disparities between the privileges of the old and the young, and ways to match these with poverty and wealth, insignificance and importance. Hence, the Son of Heaven wears the dragon robe of royal red with its ceremonial cap, the feudal lords wear the black dragon robe with its ceremonial cap, the great officers wear a skirt with an ornamented border and the appropriate cap, and the knights wear a hat of skin with their clothes. The inner power of a person must match his position; his position must match his emolument; his emolument must match his services to the state. From the position of the knight up to the supreme position, all must be moderated through rituals and music. The ordinary masses, the Hundred Clans, must be controlled by laws and norms of behavior (Wang, 1988: 178).

Here, "ritual principles" refer to a sign system used to separate social ranks; for example, the costumes of the emperor (the Son of Heaven), feudal lords, and great officers are a mark of their social status. However, the last two sentences suggest that ritual principles should be reserved for great officers and above and that punishments should be imposed on those of low origin. In Yang Liang's words, "Gentlemen should be regulated by morality and petty men by punishments" (Wang, 1988: 178). Therefore, rituals and punishments are classified in social governance, embodying the widely circulated idea in *The Book of Rites* that "the rules of rites do not go down to common people. The penalties do not go up to the great officers" (Chen, 2014: 436).

Thus, Xunzi shifted from ritual and musical cultivation to ritual-based governance. As recorded in "The Teachings of the Ru," "Ritual principles are the inch, foot, double yard, and great yard to the ruler of men for the measurement of his servants. These grades encompass all grades of men" (Wang, 1988: 145–146). Yang Liang also remarked that "the double yard and great yard are used to measure the length. The measurement of constraint is for the regulation of indulgence […] Rituals can be used by the ruler as a tool to govern his people" (Wang, 1988: 146). As the emperor focused on ritual-based governance, it was important for him to read *Rituals*: "*Rituals* contains the model of primary social distinctions and categories used by analogy for the guiding rules and ordering norms of behavior. Accordingly, when learning in *Rituals* has been perfected, it is completed" (Wang, 1988: 12). The book *Xunzi* offers contrastive comparisons between the model, the equivalent of today's statute law, and analogical extensions, similar to today's common law (Zhang, 2008: 681). For instance, "On the Regulations of a King"王制 and "The Great Compendium" 大略 both mentioned that "when the model covers an affair, use it as a basis for action, and when there is no provision in the model, use the analogical extension of the proper categories as a basis for proceeding" (Wang, 1988: 151, 500). Both the model and analogical extensions are meant to regulate people's behaviors through written ritual principles and conventional customs, two sign systems used to regulate people's semiosis. Xunzi concluded, "The model is the first manifestation of order" (Wang, 1988: 230). Therefore, models are of paramount importance to the governance of a state.

According to Xunzi, the systems of ritual and musical signs and legal signs have different weights in managing state affairs. This opinion distinguishes his views from those of the Legalist School. The chapter "Debate on the Principles of Warfare" includes a discussion between Xunzi and Li Si, his disciple, on humanity and justice, in which Xunzi refuted Li Si, saying:

> Rites are the highest expression of order and discrimination, the root of strength of the state, the Way in which the majestic way of authority is created, and the focus of merit and fame. Kings and dukes who proceed in accordance with their requirements obtain the whole world, whereas those who do not, bring ruin to their altars of soil and grain. Hence, strong armor and keen soldiers will not guarantee victory; high walls and deep moats will not ensure defensive strength; stern orders and many punishments will not assure majestic authority. If they proceed according to the Way of ritual principles, they will succeed; if they do not, they will fail (Wang, 1988: 281).

Since the reform launched by Shang Yang, the rulers of the Qin state had attached great importance to rewarding military exploits and enforcing rules and regulations, thus governing through strict laws and violent repression. Xunzi pointed out the drawbacks of such a reign, confirmed by the developmental trajectory of the Qin Dynasty. Although laws contribute to the governance of a state, the best way to rule a country is to combine laws with rituals, as suggested in "Working Songs" 成相, "The classic standards of order are rituals associated with punishments. Where the gentleman keeps them in repair, the Hundred Clans are tranquil. He makes brilliant inner power and is cautious with punishments, so the nation is orderly and all within the four seas

peaceful" (Wang, 1988: 461). Rituals and musical principles and corporal punishment underpin the reign of a state, yet those in charge are supposed to emphasize morality and be cautious about punishments. As Yu Ronggen commented, "'Rituals and legal punishments' are about the two fundamental tools of the governance of a state, while the expression 'emphasizing morality and being cautious about punishments' reveals their relationship: Xunzi attaches different weights to them" (1988: 417). Based on the ritual and legal thoughts expressed in *Xunzi*, Yu's claim seems reasonable.

6.2.2 Xunzi's Summary of Semiotic Thoughts on Names

The relationship between name and substance, on which the philosophers of Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, Legalism, and the School of Names have different views, has always been a major topic in Pre-Imperial sign studies. Theories of and intellectual inquiries into their relationship have matured over time. At the beginning of Xunzi's era, people aspired for order and peace after long periods of social chaos. The seven states competed for supremacy, and in the learning sphere, efforts were made to unify various traditions of thought to eliminate ideological confusion. Kong Fan explains, "Xunzi clarifies the ideas of various schools on names in an effort to end the confusion in the realm of learning and unify academic thoughts" (1997: 176). Therefore, Xunzi synthesized the thoughts of various schools concerning names and realities.

To summarize these theories, Xunzi had to standardize the use of names, because "if terminology is not corrected, what is said cannot be followed" (Chen, 2014: 42). This was a key task in the rectification of names, as recorded in "On the Correct Use of Names," "The 'use' of a particular name is to clearly understand the object when the name is heard. The 'link' of names [in syntactic units] consists in compositions formed by stringing words together. When the use and the link between names are grasped, we are said to know the names. Names are used to define different realities" (Wang, 1988: 422–423).

First, when we hear a "name," we tend to relate it to "reality," i.e., "the use of a particular name." Therefore, the concept of a name must correspond to the real entity it represents. Statements and compositions tied together by names are called the "link of names," or as per Yang Liang, "the pairs of names" (Wang, 1988: 423). This describes harmonious and correct name matches and combinations. "When the use and the link between names are grasped, we are said to have known the names." As a result, Xunzi defines "names" as follows, "Names are used to define different realities" (Wang, 1988: 342). Names are expected to "correspond" to the realities they reflect. The name of an entity is the product of abstract thinking to facilitate communication. To this end, there must be an agreed name for each particular item, "which is why they are given a general conventional name and used to define each other" (Wang, 1988: 411).

Second, Xunzi summarized the main sources of "names" as follows:

> This is how the later kings get established names: they followed the Shang Period in the terminology of criminal law, the Zhou Period in the names of the titles of rank and dignity, and Rituals in the names of the forms of culture. By applying various names to the myriad things, they followed the established custom and general definitions of the central Xia states. For villages of distant regions practicing different customs, they relied on the standard terminology [of the Xia states], enabling these villages to communicate (Wang, 1988: 211).

In this quote, later kings refer to the kings of the Zhou Period. The later kings are mentioned because it is customary for scholars to allude to the ancients to highlight their insights. Feng Youlan observed that the philosophers of the Hundred Schools emphasized the importance of their doctrines by linking them with those of earlier sages. For instance, in defending the principles of the Zhou Period, Confucius frequently referred to King Wen of Zhou and the Duke of Zhou. Mozi called for scholars to follow the Xia Period rather than the Zhou Period, and thus went back to Yu the Great, who came before King Wen of Zhou and the Duke of Zhou. Mencius went further, referring to Yao and Shun to overshadow Yu the Great. During Xunzi's era, King Wen of Zhou and the Duke of Zhou were surpassed by other wise men; thus, they were described as "later kings" (Feng, 2011: 165). How were their names established over time? The terminology of criminal laws was handed down from the Shang Dynasty, the names of the titles of rank and dignity from the Zhou Period, and names of the forms of culture from *Rituals*. Quoting Hao Yixing in the *Collected Exegesis of Xunzi*, Wang wrote, "Rites and courtesies refer to the establishment and respect of the rituals and customs of sacrificial ceremonies, *Rituals* refers to the 'ritual principles' of the Zhou Period. There was no name for *Rites and Ceremonies* in ancient times; instead, it was directly called *Rituals* or the *Book of Rites*" (Wang, 1988: 411). "Various names" 散名 refers to the different names of the myriad things. Wu Feibai considered various names as equivalent to today's common terms, different from criminal terminology and titles indicating rank, dignity, rites, and courtesies, which form a coherent system. The various names of things followed the established customs of the Xia Period without rectification. Therefore, various names corresponded to local dialects, resulting in various references requiring translation to be understood (Wu, 2009: 744). Taking the example of the scenario in *Yin Wenzi: The great Tao*, "The people of Zheng called an uncut jade *pu*, (Wang, 1957: 23) while the people of Zhou referred to undried mice as *pu*" (Wang, 1957: 38). Therefore, in the state of Zhou, the people of Zheng had to use *pu* to refer to undried mice, while in Zheng, the people of Zhou had to use *pu* to describe uncarved jade to avoid "misunderstandings" in communication.

Third, Xunzi summarized the basic principles of naming. As stated in "On the Correct Use of Names," "They established names to refer to objects" (Wang, 1988: 415), which Yang Liang annotated as follows, "It is difficult to distinguish the concept of an object from another without naming them; therefore, the sages categorized them and gave them names so the objects were clarified" (Wang, 1988: 342). In short, names were established to refer to objects. Note that the "establishment" of names discussed by Xunzi differs from Confucius' "rectification" of names. Indeed, the latter seeks to correct the changed reality by using already established names, especially in the field of politics. In contrast, the former recognizes the evolution

of the corresponding system of name and reality. In other words, it embraces new political trends that have become established facts, creating new naming systems. In addition, Xunzi defined "names" as a notion that transcends the political sphere, supporting most of Confucius' discussion of names. Xunzi also defined the purpose of "names" as "to make clear what is noble and what is base and to discriminate between what are the same and what are different" (Wang, 1988: 415). "Creating distinctions between noble and base" was derived from Confucian semiotic thought on political ethics, while "creating separations between the same and the different" was derived from Moist semiotic thought on linguistic logic. The former was based on the hierarchical ranking of society and the latter on *tianguan* 天官, the mind's awareness of the defining characteristics that distinguish things. "Whether things are the same or different depends on *tianguan*" (Wang, 1988: 415), which depends on people's senses and perceptions of different objects through different organs like the ears, eyes, nose, mouth, heart, and others.

The second principle of naming is to follow the established rules, as recorded in "On the Correct Use of Names":

> Names have no intrinsic appropriateness. They are bound to something by an agreement to name it. Once this agreement is established, the custom is created and accepted as "appropriate." If a name differs from the one agreed upon, it is considered "inappropriate." Names have no intrinsic objects. They are bound to a reality by an agreement to name that object. Once this object is established, the custom is created and is called the name of this object. Names have intrinsic good qualities. When a name is direct, easy, and not at odds with the thing it designates, it is called a "good name." (Wang, 1988: 420)

Moreover, Yang Liang added that "names have no intrinsic appropriateness, which means that names are not fixed in the first place. They are bound to a reality by agreement and are defined by established custom. If the reality is referred to as *tian* (sky), all other people will call it *tian*" (Wang, 1988: 420). This also addresses the arbitrariness of signs. For example, the Chinese character *tian* 天, whose form involves motivation, looks like a blanket above the earth, but its sound is arbitrary. Once the arbitrarily defined name has been established, it cannot be changed. Originally, names have no fixed reality, but become bound to certain realities over time. When custom is established, names can be used to represent a reality, thus avoiding confusion. For instance, the Chinese character *ma* 马 designates a real horse. Once this custom has been established, *ma* cannot be used to refer to a deer; otherwise, confusion will result from misrepresentation. The story of "misrepresenting a deer for a horse"[2] reveals the attitude of people who either intend to follow the established name or succumb to authority to change the name of the object. Therefore, the act of calling a real deer by the name *horse* is the touchstone of one's political standpoint. "Names have intrinsic good qualities. When a name is direct, easy, and not at odds with the thing it designates, it is called a 'good name.'" (Wang, 1988: 420) This indicates

[2] According to *Records of Grand Historian,* the story of "misrepresenting a deer for a horse" was about Zhao Gao, a most powerful minister in the Qin Dynasty who deliberately presented a deer as a horse to find out whether other officials would obey his orders unconditionally. The story became an idiom to describe a situation in which the fact is deliberately misrepresented, twisted or misinterpreted. See Sima (1982: 273).

that when the match between name and reality is widely accepted, by simply using the name, people understand what you are talking about, so it is a good name that represents a perfect combination of name and reality. All things in the world come together to form different "realities," each with its corresponding name, which is also called a "concept." From a semiotics perspective, "once a sign system is established, the relationship between the signified and the signifier is definite and certain, limited by relatively fixed social conventions. In this way, the information conveyed by the name is effective" (Zhao, 2004: 12). Those who defend the system of name and reality understand that the match between the signified and signifier can be achieved by conventions to ensure the effective transmission of information.

A third principle of naming is "examining objects to determine their number" (Wang, 1988: 420). This involves checking different realities to identify the number of names. It is well known that, unlike English nouns, all Chinese nouns have no plural forms; thus, the number of names cannot be judged based on their form. As a result, Wu Feibai argued that the rule of "examining objects to determine their number" deserves our attention in the theory of "name creation" (2009: 760). Xunzi said as follows:

> Things that have the same appearance but different locations, and things that have different appearances but the same location should be kept distinct. Where the appearance is the same, but they are deemed to have different locations, even though they may properly be conjoined, they are called two objects. Where the appearance undergoes metamorphosis, but there is no distinction in the reality, yet they are deemed different, it is called "transformation." Where there is transformation but no distinction, it is called one object (Wang, 1988: 420).

"Things that have the same appearance but different locations" refers, for instance, to two horses that are of the same type but located in different places. Although they belong to the same category and share the same name, they are "two realities." "Things that have different appearances but the same location" refers, for example, to the young and middle-aged Confucius. Although his appearance changed with the passage of time, there is no denying that he is still Confucius. This is what is meant by "transformation." Things that undergo transformation without substantial change still refer to the "same reality." As a result, the realities must be verified to identify the number of names needed, "By checking the quantity of objects, the number of names can be determined and necessary changes can be made so that each name matches its reality and that confusion can is minimized" (Kong, 1997: 186). This constitutes another major principle of naming.

Fourth, Xunzi provided a detailed account of the reasons for the correction of names. The Pre-Imperial Period was marked by political unrest and the creation of various schools. People followed their own beliefs and considered what they deemed right as the truth and what they deemed wrong as falsehood. Many bizarre thoughts and sayings emerged, causing disorder in the philosophical world. Faced with endless conflicts and wars, people longed for peace and unity. Thus, in response to the desire for stable governance, Xunzi put forward the idea of the correction of names in an effort to unify thoughts and learning.

From the perspective of social reality, he wrote, "Now, since the sage kings are no more, the preservation of names is neglected, strange propositions have sprung

up, names and their realities have become confused, and the boundary between right and wrong has become unclear, even both the officials charged with preserving the codes of law and the Ru who recite their texts and enumerate their topics are confused" (Wang, 1988: 422). Sages like King Wen of Zhou and the Duke of Zhou, who regulated the world order by establishing names and appropriate signs, were no more. The fact that the royal family of the Zhou Period had lost control over the country was reflected in the disruption of the ritual and musical systems that bore hierarchical significance and in the failure to distinguish between ranks and positions and names and realities. This caused confusion between names and realities and led to chaotic thoughts. Even the officials who upheld the law and Confucians who defended traditional thoughts became suspicious of the things they had long preserved. These disasters were all caused by the confusion of name and reality. "The Teaching of the Ru" states that people who engage in "wrongful conduct" and "unjustifiable causes" are not rare. "As for such theorems as 'the mutual interchange of the actual and the empty,' the division of 'hardness and whiteness,' and the separation of 'identity and difference,'" (Wang, 1988: 124) Xunzi divided these "obscene and harmful sayings" into "three categories of errors":

> "To suffer insult is not disgrace," "the sage does not love himself," "to kill a robber is not to kill a man"—these are examples of errors in the use of names that disrupt names. If we test these examples against the purpose of having names and observe what alternative works, we can exclude these statements. "Mountains and marshes are level," "essential desires are rare," "grain- and grass-fed animals add nothing to taste; the great bell adds nothing to the music"—these are examples of errors in the use of objects that disrupt names. If we test these statements with the senses—which are the basis for distinguishing the same from the different—and observe what alternative works, we can exclude these statements. "The flying arrow does not pass the pillar," "a white horse is not a horse"—these are examples of errors in the use of names that disrupt objects. If we test these examples against the agreed use of names and if we use "what one accepts" to show that "what one rejects" is wrong, we can exclude these statements. As a general principle, all unorthodox explanations and perverse sayings, having been detached from the correct Way and created on an individual authority, belong to one of these three categories of errors (Wang, 1988: 420–421).

To avoid these errors, we must "test these statements with the senses—which are the basis for distinguishing the same from the different—and observe what alternative works." Examples such as "the white horse is not a horse," derived from Gongsun Long, belong to the third error, as a white horse is still a horse, a logical mistake similar to that of "killing a thief is not killing a man" (Sun, 2001: 418). Furthermore, we must "test these examples against the agreed use of names and use 'what one accepts' to show that 'what one rejects' is wrong." According to Xunzi, all unorthodox explanations and perverse sayings can be clarified under these three types. He also proposed an overall solution to avoid committing these "three errors":

> Thus, because he understands the proper divisions, an enlightened lord does not engage in dialectics. People are easy to unify by using the Way, but you cannot share with them the widespread reasons. Thus, the enlightened lord presides over them with the authority inherent in his position, leads them with the Way, reinforces it among them with decrees, illustrates it with proclamations and regulates them with punishments. Thus, people's conversion to the Way is like magic. What need there is for dialectics and explanations! (Wang, 1988: 422)

When an enlightened lord knows the secrets of sophistry, namely the three erroneous ways to cause disorder, he does not argue with eloquent people but gives them the cold shoulder. Thus, common people can be regulated by the *Tao*. A wise lord must rule over people with his authority to lead them on the right path, admonish and instruct them, enlighten them with proclamations, and prevent certain behaviors by threatening punishments. When dialectics and explanations are no longer needed, the controversy of the philosophical world will fade away and lead to unity. From a political viewpoint, Xunzi's summary of the sign thoughts of names contributed to the unification of various states. However, based on the developmental trajectory of philosophical thoughts, these strict prohibitions may have caused a decline in philosophical inquiries.

6.3 Han Fei's Academic Achievement and Semiotic Thought

Confucianism and Legalism both serve worldly purposes. The thinkers of both schools use their doctrines for political purposes. The marginalization of Confucian theories meant that Confucian scholars were not at the political center. In contrast, many Legalist thinkers such as Li Kui, Wu Qi, Shen Buhai, and Shang Yang managed to climb the political ladder with the support of the rulers. Regarding methods of social governance, Confucianism emphasizes moral cultivation to encourage people to voluntarily accept the social order based on ritual and musical sign systems. Legalism advocates the use of power tactics and violent rules to subordinate officials and ordinary masses to the social order established by the legal sign system. In terms of real-world effectiveness, Confucianism yields slow results, whereas Legalism guarantees fast returns. Their effects on governance can be compared with raising children and planting trees: the former takes a long time, and the latter guarantees quick benefits, justifying the popularity of the Legalist School with the ruler.[3] Of course, the rise of Legalism is closely related to the social and political conditions of the time. Yang Dongchun stated:

> The establishment of the Legalist School has everything to do with the transformation of the social, political, and economic spheres of the time. Previously, the subordinate hierarchy of the aristocracy was maintained by rituals. During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, ritual-based governance collapsed, developing into an autocratic monarchy accompanied with the rise of the neo-property class. People subject to oppression

[3] As written in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Shang Yang went to the court to see the Duke Xiao of the State of Qin and conversed with him about the ways to rule a nation implemented by Yao and Shun and those implemented by Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu. Duke Xiao was not intrigued by his statements. However, when Shang Yang spoke with him about the ruling methods of the five overlords of the Spring and Autumn Period, Xiao seemed to never tire of listening. He also bluntly stated that he would not spend decades to make a sage king out of himself, following "the ways of the wise kings of the past." He would rather adopt the methods of the "five overlords" because they guaranteed quick results (Sima 1982: 2228–2229).

> were able to hold their heads high with the newly gained independence and freedom. Therefore, the rituals used to maintain the subordinate hierarchy were not sufficient for governance and laws and regulations had to be applied. The effectiveness of such measures can be seen in Guan Zhong's success in the State of Qi and in Zi Chan's achievement in the State of Zheng (2005: 59).

When the morality and rituals controlling people's initiatives fall short of the needs of governance, rulers often turn to laws and regulations for mandatory force. As a result, the Pre-Imperial thought on signs evolved from ritual and logic-based governance to law-based politics.

6.3.1 Laws Bring Peace and Order: From Ritual-Based Governance to Law-Based Governance

Starting in the late Warring States Period, with Xunzi as the initiator, there was a trend among scholars to combine Confucianism with Legalism. Scholars from both schools sought to serve their country and offer their own remedies for social chaos. The remedy advocated by Confucian scholars before Xunzi was to restore the ritual systems of the Zhou Period, a set of hierarchical sign systems. However, with dukes competing for supremacy and people abandoning the ritual system to promote their worldly reputations, no one welcomed Confucian doctrines. Similarly, when Mencius traveled with his disciples across various states to exhort dukes to exercise benevolence in governance, his advice was rejected by the dukes, who were too focused on building a powerful army to conquer cities and territories and make their states stronger. The "benevolence" advocated by Confucius and Mencius focused on people's voluntary recognition and acceptance at the moral and ethical levels of the ritual system of the Zhou Period, which were used to distinguish ranks and maintain a hierarchical order. No wonder their ideas were not favored by the dukes longing for supremacy. Xunzi understood that moral consciousness alone was not enough to restore the social order. It was necessary to resort to external mandatory forces, namely laws and regulations. The doctrines of Xunzi focused on rituals, with laws playing a supporting role. As such, the two concepts reinforced each other. However, Han Fei, a disciple of Xunzi, believed that human nature is evil and that a lord must rule by law to regulate a chaotic society through mandatory punishments. In this sense, the Confucian semiotic thought of Confucius and Mencius can be considered part of semioethics, while the semiotic thought of Legalism represented by Han Fei falls can be categorized as legal semiotics.

Legal semiotics is a sign system established to standardize all types of meaning expression behaviors in human society. According to Xie Hui, "A law represents a sign system for interpersonal behaviors. Like all other signs used to refer to certain realities, the law is an induction, a summary, and a manifestation of personal interactions. It provides signs for corresponding facts and for facilitating endeavors to hand them. But the signs themselves are never the facts and the endeavors" (2005:

2). Although Han Fei did not use the notion of legal semiotics, his analysis of the law reveals similar thoughts:

> The law is codified in books, kept in government offices, and promulgated among the hundred surnames. Tact is hidden in its heart and useful for comparing diverse motivating factors of human conduct and secretly manipulating the body of officials. Therefore, the law wants nothing more than publicity; tact abhors visibility. For this reason, when the enlightened sovereign speaks of the law, high and low within the borders will hear and know. Thus, the speech prevails on everybody in the room. When he applies his tact, none of his favorites and courtiers will notice it. Thus, it cannot be displayed in the room (Wang, 1998: 380).

According to Han Fei, "law" refers to a set of legal codes established by the authorities, written in books, and promoted among the masses. He compared the law with "tact" and highlighted its publicity and transparency, arguing that the law should be known to all. In this way, people will be informed of written laws once they have been created and their behaviors will be regulated by this legal semiotic text, as "the law serves as a sign system that people use to build order" (Xie, 2003: 35). A law must be expressed by signs intelligible to the people of targeted regions so that its function can be fulfilled. Following the unification of the Qin Dynasty, the standardization of the written language and promulgation of decrees represent the continuation of Han Fei's legal thoughts. In "Deciding Between Two Legalistic Doctrines," Han Fei described the nature and function of the law as follows:

> The law includes clearly defined mandates and ordinances for official bureaux, penalties that are definite in people's minds, rewards for the careful observers of the law and punishments that are inflicted on offenders against the order. It is what subjects and ministers take as a model. If the ruler is tactless, delusion will come to the superior; if the subjects and ministers are lawless, disorder will appear among the inferiors. Thus, neither can be dispensed with: both are instruments of emperors and kings (Wang, 1998: 397).

He further emphasized that the law refers to regulations formulated and issued by officials, made known to the ordinary masses whose behaviors were regulated accordingly. Those who uphold the law will be rewarded; those who violate it will be punished. Ministers must obey the law, which is a necessary instrument of emperors and kings.

To achieve the same goal of maintaining social order, Confucius and Mencius advocated ruling with rituals, with morality and ethics as the core. Xunzi focused on ruling with rituals and laws, with the former playing the lead role and the latter a supporting one. Han Fei suggested ruling by laws with external violent punishments playing the lead role. Han Fei did not believe in the concepts of benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, and loyalty Confucians proposed, as he believed that human nature is evil. As recorded in the "Eight Canons," "If the superior does not exercise these means of control, the inferiors will dare to undermine his authority. If small culprits are not eliminated, he will have to censure big culprits. When censuring culprits, if the name and fact are related, he should immediately enforce the penalty" (Wang, 1998: 434). According to Han Fei, if we show tolerance instead of imposing sanctions, evildoers will dare to challenge the emperor's authority, and if we do not eliminate small culprits, we will end up with massive punishments. Therefore, when

the charge matches the offence and the evildoer proves to deserve the death penalty, he must be executed immediately. Han Fei conducted his analysis from two perspectives. First, from the perspective of human nature, "By nature, everybody wants to live in fact and reputation. So, does the ruler want both the name of being worthy and intelligent and the fact of rewarding and punishing people?" (Wang, 1998: 438) The masses want both a good reputation and tangible benefits by nature. The emperor also aspires to a good reputation and the power to reward and punish others. In this way, he can manipulate people. Second, from the perspective of social governance, "Indeed, a strictly kept household sees no fierce servants, but a compassionate mother has spoiled children. From this, I know that authority and position are able to suppress violence, but that virtue and favor are not sufficient to stop disorder" (Wang, 1998: 461). Han Fei offered a real-life scenario, suggesting that strict rules can eliminate fierce servants, but a fond mother who spoils her children may lead them astray. Therefore, Han Fei argued that ruling by morality, as advocated by Confucianism, is "unqualified to prevent disorder." He preferred that the power of the law be used to put society in order. This raises a question about the reasons for adopting the legal sign system, i.e., its value and significance.

From the perspective of the positive role of the law in social governance, the law can forcefully regulate people's behaviors, while a reward and punishment system can motivate law-abiding people and deter lawbreakers. Han Fei repeatedly emphasized the importance of knowing the law and obeying it in the governance of a country, "If law-abiding people are strong, the country is strong; If law-abiding people are weak, the country is weak" (Wang, 1998: 31). "He who respects the law is strong; he who neglects the law is weak" (Wang, 1998: 126).

At the state level, a country is strong if the ruler governs it by law; it is weak if the ruler neglects the law. For instance, the ruler of Qin appointed Shang Yang to launch a radical reform, and Qin was thus transformed from a small border country into a powerful state. Conversely, Chu originally overshadowed other states in the south, but Wu Qi, Chu's reformer, was persecuted to death for colluding aristocrats before the reform could take effect. As a result, Chu lagged behind in later contention for supremacy among the seven states.

From a social governance perspective, "If the laws are distinct and clear, the worthy cannot invade the unworthy, the strong cannot outrage the weak, and the many cannot violate the few" (Wang, 1998: 202). In other words, if the laws of a country are clearly defined, both the worthy and unworthy will have their own rules to follow, and if everyone acts according to the law and ensures that his or her behavior is permitted by law, invasions, and outrages will be avoided. Scholars before Han Fei recognized the role of the law in defining rights and duties to avoid conflict. In a story recorded in the *Book of Lord Shang*, hundreds of people chased after a rabbit in the field, and thieves did not dare steal the rabbits for sale in the market. Why? The rights and duties (ownership) of the first rabbit had yet to be fixed, while those of the latter had already been fixed (Gao, 1974: 190). The same story is recorded in the *Spring and Autumn of Lü Buwei* and *Yin Wenzi*. This highlights the importance of this notion in Legalism. The law is used to "fix duties and rights." Once they are

fixed, the phenomenon of strong bullying the weak and the many violating the few will cease to exist.

Han Fei defended his ideas about the negative side of human nature as follows: "The present world does not have a single man as upright as Boyi, but this era is full of culprits. That is why laws, weights, and measures are made. If weights and measures are of faith, Boyi loses no reason to be right and Robber Zhi cannot do wrong" (Wang, 1998: 202–203). According to Han Fei, in his time, society has no people as good as Boyi, but many bad people. For this reason, legal standards must be formulated to regulate people's behaviors. Thanks to these standards, Boyi can continue his good deeds and Robber Zhi will not dare break the rules. These lines also show why we need legal signs. Once the legal sign system is established, rules and principles can be generated to standardize and interpret people's behaviors of meaning expression. To avoid punishment, people must not break the law, or they would not be spared. As Xie Hui stated, "The reason why laws have become signs of action has its primary root in people's disordered movements and in their cry for orderly movements" (2003: 41).

As a law functions as a standard for orderly human actions, we must ensure that it is mandatory and authoritative. Han Fei suggested that "in the state of an enlightened sovereign, his orders are the most precious among men's words and his laws are the most appropriate rules for governance. Two words cannot be equally precious, nor can two laws be equally appropriate. Therefore, words and deeds not conforming to laws and decrees must be forbidden" (Wang, 1998: 394). During the reign of a wise king, decrees and laws represent the most vital signs, so the words and deeds that violate them must be prohibited. In other words, it is necessary to ensure that people's statements and actions conform to the laws and decrees; if not, they must be strictly banned and punished. This highlights the compulsory regulatory effect of laws and decrees on semiosis. People's statements and actions, except those of the emperor, must be within the limits of the legal sign system. If these limits are crossed, those responsible must be punished in accordance with laws and decrees. As stated in "Han Feizi: Two Handles":

> The lord of men, whenever he wants to eliminate the culprits, must see the norms (forms) accord with the names and the words never differ from the tasks. Whenever a minister says a word, the ruler should assign him a task to accomplish in accordance with his word, and in accordance with the task call the work to account. If the work matches the task and the task matches the word, he should be rewarded. In contrast, if the work is not equivalent to the task and the task is not equivalent to the word, he should be punished. Accordingly, any minister whose word is great but whose work is small should be punished. Not because the work is small, but because the work is not equivalent to the name. Any minister whose word is small but whose work is great should also be punished. Not because great work is not desirable, but because the discrepancy between work and name is worse than the accomplishment of great work. Thus, the minister should be punished (Wang, 1998: 40–41).

It has generally been assumed that "word" means what is said, "norm" refers to a real action, and "see the norms comply with the names" refers to checking whether words correspond to actions. However, based on the examples provided before and after this line, "see the norms comply with the names" should be interpreted as

checking whether the words and deeds of the ministers correspond with their ranks and duties, or in other words, whether the semiosis conforms to legal standards. Tian Cheng of the State of Qi and Marquis Zhao of the State of Han illustrate this point well. Tian Cheng, a minister, petitioned for rank and bounties, which he conferred upon the body of officials. He enlarged pecks and bushels and distributed alms among the hundred surnames. In this way, Duke Jian of Qi lost the handle of commendation, which Tian Cheng set to use. In the case of Marquis Zhao of the State of Han, once in by-gone days, he was drunk and fell asleep. The crown-keeper, seeing the ruler exposed to the cold, put a coat over him. When the Marquis awoke, he was glad and asked the attendants, "Who put more clothes on my body?" "The crown-keeper did," they replied. The Marquis then found the coat-keeper guilty and put the crown-keeper to death. He punished the coat-keeper for the neglect of his duty and the crown-keeper for overriding his post. It was not that the Marquis was not afraid of catching a cold but that he considered them not doing their assigned duties worse than his becoming sick. According to Han Fei, people whose behavior does not match their status and duties should be punished, even if they act with good intentions (e.g., giving clothes to keep the Marquis warm, Wang, 1998: 41) This demonstrates the authority of the law.

Finally, for people to recognize the legal sign system, equality and fairness must be considered, a point mentioned several times by Han Fei, "The law does not fawn over the noble; the string does not yield to the crooked. Whatever the application of the law, the wise cannot reject it nor can the brave defy it. Punishments for faults never forget the ministers, rewards for good never miss the commoners" (Wang, 1998: 38). "(The extremity of censure and punishment must extend) as far as any relative or noble held guilty. The law must prevail among the most beloved" (Wang, 1998: 328). "In the state of an intelligent sovereign, officials are elevated and ranks are granted according to their respective merits; therefore, there are noble ministers; words always turn into deeds and any fraud is always censured; therefore, there are no powerful ministers" (Wang, 1998: 427).

Han Fei believed that the law does not bend to anybody. It cannot be changed because lawbreakers are of noble origin, just as the string will not yield to the bow. Therefore, punishments are the same for people of all ranks. Only then can the wise and the brave be convicted. The idea of avoiding punishing officials proposed by Confucianism becomes obsolete. Instead, penalties and punishments should not discriminate between relationships and ranks; those who violate the law cannot be spared, even if they are the beloveds of judges. Officials who contribute should be rewarded, and those who perform evil deeds must be punished accordingly.

Legalism replaces the system of ritual and musical signs of Confucianism with the legal sign system and the rule with moral principles with the rule by law. The social order is maintained by external mandatory forces rather than by people's inner moral consciousness. In short, ritual signs "mark" people of different hierarchical ranks and origins, while legal signs emphasize "equality." This means that the law should not bend to anybody, as Han Fei stated, "Nothing can match the penalty for overawing people" (Wang, 1998: 38).

6.3.2 *Comparing Form and Name to Ensure Their Match: From Logic to Politics*

In Confucianism, a "name" is a political term referring to rank and position. For logicians and Mohist philosophers, a "name" is a logical and philosophical term referring to the relationship between a name and reality. As this was discussed at length in Chapter Four, this section focuses on the Legalists' theory of form and name 形名论. Han Fei's discussion of the concept of "name" falls under linguistics and logic but also involves politics and legal principles. In this regard, Feng Youlan suggested, "Han Fei applies dialecticians' theory of name and reality real politics" (2011: 186). According to Han Fei, the relationship between form and name can be used as a standard to check whether the meaning-carrying behaviors of subjects and people conform to laws and decrees.

First, Han Fei shared the idea of Mohists and Xunzi when discussing "names" as reflections of "realities":

> The way to assume oneness starts from the study of terminology. When names are rectified, things will be settled; when names are distorted, things will change. Therefore, the sage holds oneness in his hand and rests in tranquility, letting names assign themselves to tasks and affairs settle themselves. If he does not show off his sagacity, the inferiors will reveal their earnestness and uprightness. He can then appoint them to offices in accordance with their words and let them choose their tasks. He can give them powers in accordance with their needs and let them rise in rank. Thus, first, he rectifies their names, then he works with them, and finally he makes them accomplish tasks. Therefore, he promotes them through the examination of names. When the name is not clear, he looks for its connotation by tracing its form. After the form and the name are compared and identified, he puts the product to use (Wang, 1998: 45).

Wang Xianshen explains, "'Oneness' is the *Tao*. There is no other concept that has appeared more times until now; therefore, it is the only concept that can be used to correct the names. This is what Han Fei meant by 'starting from the study of terminology.'" (Wang, 1998: 45) According to Han Fei, names reflect the properties of objects. Only when the properties of an object are correctly reflected by its name (concept) can its name and reality be identified. If the properties of an object have changed, its name should be changed accordingly. This is what Han meant by "when names are rectified, things will be settled; when names are distorted, things will change. Therefore, the sage holds oneness in his hand and rests in tranquility, letting names assign themselves to tasks and affairs settle themselves." According to Zhou Xunchu, these lines indicate that the identification of the names of objects through the *Tao* is prioritized. In this way, when the name correctly captures the object, its properties are also clear, but if the name only vaguely captures the object, its properties are elusive. Therefore, the emperor approaches the *Tao* with a tranquil mind, letting the name be identified by the object it represents and affairs be settled by their own properties (2009: 50). In so doing, the properties of an affair will reveal themselves naturally. If we want to examine an object without knowing its name, we can identify it through the properties exhibited by its form, a method called comparison and verification. Here, we check the meaning of the notion, clarify the

divisions of categories, and align the form and properties of the object with its "name." Han Fei further highlighted that "name and reality will support each other and will be accomplished. Form and shadow will coincide with each other and stand together" (Wang, 1998: 208).

Han Fei valued the logical expression of language. He told a story about "the contradictory words of the seller of shields and halberds," which is familiar to all:

> Once there was a man from the State of Chu selling shields and halberds. Praising his shields, he said, "My shields are so solid that nothing can penetrate them." Again, praising his halberds, he said, "My halberds are so sharp that they can penetrate anything." In response to his words, someone asked, "How about using your halberds to pierce your shields?" To this, the man could not answer. Indeed, impenetrable shields and penetrating halberds cannot stand together at the same time (Wang, 1998: 350).

The same story was mentioned in "A Critique of the Doctrines of Position," wherein Han concluded that "two contradictory names cannot stand together" (Wang, 1998: 392). From this example, we conclude that Han Fei not only valued the correspondence between name and reality but also emphasized the logical representation of language.

However, as Han Fei was a successor of the Legalist School, his doctrines of form and name combined Confucian and Mohist theories, the theories of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, and studies of previous Legalist philosophers. Pioneer Legalists who wrote under the name Guanzi pointed out, "Check the reality according to the titles. Confer titles according to reality. Titles and reality can help each other and rectify each other. When titles and reality match, the state is in order. Otherwise, the state will be in chaos" (Li, 2004: 2046). The first lines discuss the relationship between name and reality in the general sense and recommend giving titles according to reality and rectifying reality with titles. In contrast, the other lines shift to the social and political sphere: the state will be in order when titles and reality match and in chaos otherwise. In addition, as highlighted by Yin Wen, a Legalist philosopher:

> A title is created to name the form of an object, which matches this title. Yet the form is not specifically used to rectify the name, neither is the name specifically designed to rectify the form. Therefore, name and form are two distinct and indispensable items that cannot be confused. Without a name, the great Tao cannot be mentioned by name; with names, the forms of various matters can be rectified. All things exist in concrete forms in the world, chaos will come if we do not distinguish them by names; names are created for various items in the world, disorder will arise if we do not match different names with their corresponding forms. Thus, form and name must be rectified so that they agree with each other (Wang, 1957: 23).

The logical sequence of this quote starts with a discussion of the correspondence between name and reality in the general sense and then adopts a different angle, suggesting that chaos will occur if the relationship between names and forms are not properly handled. Yin's discussion of names and forms focused on their role in politics. As a result, he shifted the issues of names and forms from logic and philosophy to sociology and politics.

Han Fei agreed with Yin's sequence of discussion. As mentioned, Han Fei began his discussion of name and reality from their relationship in a particular language

but shifted the focus onto political governance, like the Legalist philosophers before him:

> The lord of men, whenever he wants to suppress culprits, must see norm accord with name and word never differ from task. Whenever a minister utters a word, the ruler should in accordance with his word assign him a task to accomplish, and in accordance with the task call the work to account. If the work corresponds with the task, and the task corresponds with the word, he should be rewarded. On the contrary, if the work is not equivalent to the task, and the task not equivalent to the word, he should be punished (Wang, 1998: 40).

> Tact is the means by which to create posts according to responsibilities, to hold actual services accountable according to official titles, to exercise power over life and death, and to examine the abilities of officials. It is what the lord of men has in his grip (Wang, 1998: 397).

According to Han Fei, the emperor must ensure that forms are consistent with names to discourage bad people. In other words, the statements and behaviors of ministers (signifying conduct) must conform to their positions and duties (legal standards), based on which rewards and punishments are decided. As the ruler, he must appoint people based on their abilities and create duties and responsibilities for ministers in different posts and positions. The goal of making forms (actions/practices) that comply with names is to achieve the desired political efficacy. Moreover, the ultimate power to verify form and name, that is, the right to decide the life and death of others, belongs to the emperor. According to Zhai Jincheng, "Han Fei's words that names should conform and correspond to reality are not abstract, but concrete and practical. They evolve around the effect of social governance, especially its main idea that the emperor uses tactics and the ministers loyally serve the emperor" (2005: 88). This is the case if we check the ultimate goal of Han Fei's discussion of form and name.

Han Fei holds that all will be at peace in the state if form and name match:

> "Who utters a word creates himself a name; who has an affair creates himself a form. Compare form and name and ensure that there is no contradiction. Then the ruler will find nothing to worry about as everything is reduced to its reality." (Wang, 1998: 26)

> "the ruler holds to the name and the minister must work out the form. When form and name are compared and found identical, superior and inferior will have peace and harmony." (Wang, 1998: 47)

In "The *Tao* of the Sovereign," Han Fei proposed that if the "name" (statements and ideas) of the minister matches his "form" (actual conducts), the emperor would have no concerns. In "Wielding the Scepter," Han Fei noted that the emperor verifies the "name" (ideas and viewpoints) of the minister against his "form" (effect of his acts). If the former corresponds to the latter, the emperor and his ministers will enjoy "peace and harmony."

However, if the form contradicts the name, there are hidden dangers, "If so, the sovereign will only have the name of lord of men, but in reality he simply agrees to the care of the houses of the various ministers. Hence, your servant says, 'The court of a decaying state has no man.'" (Wang, 1998: 34).

Similarly,

> Safety and danger belong to right and wrong, but not to strength and weakness. Existence and extinction depend on substantiality and superficiality, but not on big and small numbers. For example, Qi was a state of ten thousand chariots, but her name and reality were not mutually equivalent. The ruler had superficial powers in the state and filled no gap between name and reality. Therefore, ministers could deprive the sovereign of the throne (Wang, 1998: 200).

In "Having Regulations," the ruler has only the name of lord of men but no power and territory to rule. He is subject to the care of the houses of his ministers, such as the royal family of Zhou, which ended up a puppet after the relocation of its capital. In "Safety and Danger," it is suggested that national security depends on whether the name of a sovereign matches his real power. If the sovereign has only his title with no power, the country will be in danger, as when the Tian family usurped the crown of the Qi state.

These examples show that the problem of form and name is related not only to logical expressions, but also to political issues, and the solution to the problem is to create a reality that corresponds to the name and to compare and verify right and wrong, "If the ruler closely accords form with name, the people will attend to their daily business. To leave this key and seek anything else is to fall into serious bewilderment" (Wang, 1998: 49). "He will decide between right and wrong according to the relation between name and fact and scrutinize words and phrases by means of comparison and verification" (Wang, 1998: 100).

In "Wielding the Scepter," Han Fei attached great importance to checking whether the form corresponds to the name. Wang Xianshen stated, "When the form does not deviate from the name, people will be devoted to their duties. This is the key for governance" (1998: 45). If the ruler underestimates its importance, he will be trapped in "confusion" and engage in unwise moves. In "Ministers are apt to betray, molest, or murder the ruler," Han Fei argued that the ruler should decide between right and wrong based on the relationship between names and realities, compare and verify that statements and conduct conform to legal standards, and use his conclusions to give rewards and punishments.

The reason for the transition of Han Fei's form and name doctrines from logic to politics and penalties is explained as follows, "Therefore, when people are naïve, if you regulate them with names, governance will be good; when everybody is intelligent, if you discipline them with penalties, they will obey" (Wang, 1998: 475).

If people are naïve, society will be kept in order with threats that could destroy their name (reputation), but if the world is infested with cunning and wicked people, the ruler has to regulate the behavior of the masses with mandatory laws and deal with them with penalties and punishments. Overall, it is a question of social governance. Therefore, the theory of name and reality alone is insufficient. Signifying behaviors must be regulated through penalties and punishments, which explains why penal laws were well developed in ancient China. In the era of Han Fei, the world was in nascent chaos and people longed for stable governance. The political initiative advocated by the Legalist School—to create a reality corresponding to the name and to exercise severe punishments—should produce quick results. Thus, this initiative became the main governing tool of the ruler. Penal laws served as a semiotic standard for regulating people's meaning-carrying behaviors. Xie Hui suggested, "The reason

the law is a sign of action lies in its primary root in people's disordered movements and in their cry for orderly movements" (2003: 41). This gives information about the origin of the law.

Focusing on Xunzi and Han Fei, this chapter discussed the Pre-Imperial thoughts on signs manifested in the evolution from rituals to laws and the transition of form and name. Confucius emphasizes benevolence as the key to rituals and advocates restoring order and self-regulation through moral principles. In the late Warring States Period, many wars were waged to annex other states, and people longed for stable governance. This explains the popularity of Legalist ideas, which focus on political contribution. Although educated in a Confucian way, Xunzi was not a "pure Confucian." He valued cultivation through ritual and musical principles and the restoration of order through ritual and legal signs. His disciple, Han Fei, also defended Xunzi's belief that human nature is evil but rejected his idea of cultivation through ritual and musical principles, focusing on punishments instead. Although contributing to the great unification of the Qin Dynasty, Legalist ideas also sowed the seeds for its destruction.

Names make up a semiotic system that helps people know various things and brings order to the otherwise chaotic world. In this system, objects are classified by the words (names) that designate them. Xunzi promulgated the traditional theory of names and attempted to unify thoughts and regulate order by rectifying names. By studying the relationship between form and name, a matter of logic and linguistics, Han Fei extended the discussion to its political significance and evolved it into a means of restoring social order. In doing so, he combined the Confucian theory of name correction and the theories of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, applied his Legalist theory of form and name to the control and regulation of the social order, and focused on the correspondence between names and realities as a method of governance. Close examination reveals that this theory stems from the language order, as Shen Xiaolong proposed, "The origin of the social order boils down to its semiotic criteria—language" (2008: 133). From the linguistic specification of matching form and name to the behavioral order of creating a reality that corresponds to the name, a Chinese tradition of social semiotics has been well developed, with "name" at its core.

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